ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

HOW AND WHY DID THE UNITED STATES STATE-MEDIA RELATIONSHIP HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE 2003 IRAQ WAR CONFLICT REPORTING? A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
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ANLIGA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

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HOW AND WHY DID THE UNITED STATES STATE-MEDIA RELATIONSHIP HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE 2003 IRAQ WAR CONFLICT REPORTING? A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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This thesis examines the politics of conflict reporting by exploring the role of U.S. state-media relations in the 2003 Iraq War coverage. By undertaking a critical examination of the different strategies utilised by the U.S. administration and U.S. media, this thesis seeks to discover to what extent the concurrent employment of these strategies shaped the conflict reporting, while also considering the specific interests of the administration and media which drove these strategies. The aim of the thesis is to explain why news stories during this period predominately appeared to represent the American administration's perspective and agenda.

Secondary research lays the groundwork for this claim, with supporting evidence and statistics about the Iraq War conflict reporting. The extent to which news stories appear to have been one-sided during this period is discussed. Primary research was undertaken to support these findings, consisting of a series of interviews with U.S. politicians and media representatives, and supplemented with a critical analysis of official documents and statements made by the U.S. administration. This research seeks to augment the findings with additional empirical evidence, to illuminate how the relationship between the U.S. administration and the media had an impact on the Iraq War coverage.

This study argues that the U.S. state-media relationship during the Iraq War was mutually beneficial and symbiotic; however unequal power relations permitted the U.S. administration more capacity to impact upon the coverage. It is argued that the U.S. administration depended upon the U.S. media to uphold its perspective in order to pursue its military agenda, while the U.S. media gained invaluable support for its business interests in exchange for compliance of the regulations placed upon them and widely upholding the official narrative. Despite this relationship being mutually beneficial, this study has found that the extent to which the U.S. administration's strategies regulated and restricted the U.S. media indicates that unequal power relations existed.

It thus appears that U.S. state-media relations, and the interests and strategies of both the state and the media, had a clear impact upon this coverage. Although it was mutually beneficial for the state and media to engage in this relationship, the unequal power relations and strategies utilised by the U.S. administration suggest that the U.S. media's First Amendment rights were significantly violated. Additionally, this thesis will demonstrate how this coverage impacted both public opinion and foreign and military policy, thus indicating the conflict reporting and U.S. state-media relations which shaped it have considerable wider impact and implications.

Key words: conflict reporting, state-media relations, strategies, Iraq War

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Interview Participant Index

The list of interviewees below offers details of the original interviews which were conducted for this research study. The methodology for the participant selection is discussed in Chapter 3. The interviews are referred to throughout this thesis in order to support the debates in the existing literature, as well as provide distinctive insights into the complex dynamic of the U.S. state-media relationship. The experiences, stories, and perspectives of the interviewees add a great deal to the picture of the practical implications of this interaction, and their personal views augment the claims in the existing research. These interviews constitute a distinctive contribution to knowledge and understanding of the issues examined in this thesis, supporting this study in developing an original perspective on the politics of conflict reporting and the specific impact of U.S. state-media relations on the Iraq War coverage.

Badkhen, Anna [telephone interview on 12 September 2016]
- Journalist: *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Boston Globe*, Foreign Policy, New Republic, and *The New York Times*
- Awards and Honours: Guggenheim Fellowship, Barry Lopez Visiting Writer in Ethics and Community Fellowship, and the Joel R. Seldin Award

DiMaggio, Anthony, Ph.D. [telephone interview on 28 July 2016]
- Professor of Political Science, Lehigh University
- Awards and Honours: Distinguished Service Award (2014, Lincoln Land Community College), Master Teacher Finalist Award (2015, Lincoln Land Community College)

Goldenberg, Suzanne [telephone interview on 3 September 2016]
- Journalist: *The Guardian* (U.S. correspondent), *The Washington Post*
- Awards and Honours: Bayeux-Calvados Award (for war correspondent coverage in Iraq), named Reporter of the Year by What the Papers Say, the Foreign Press Association, and the London Press Club, London Press Club's Edgar Wallace Award (2001), James Cameron Memorial Trust Award (2001)

Gore, Albert 'Al', J.D. [interview in the Office of the Honorable Al Gore in Nashville, Tennessee on 6 September 2016]
- Vice President of the United States (1993-2001)
- United States Senator, Tennessee (1985-1993)
- Awards and Honours: Nobel Peace Prize, Primetime Emmy Award, National Defense Service Medal

Housley, Adam [telephone interview on 9 September 2016]
- Senior News Correspondent: Fox News (2001-present)
- Awards and Honours: Regional Emmy Award, Associated Press Reporting Award, RTDNA Award

Hutton, Robert [telephone interview on 18 October 2016]
- Political Correspondent: Bloomberg News

Lawler, David [telephone interview on 6 January 2017]
- Reporter: *The Daily Telegraph* (Washington D.C. political correspondent)

Lisnek, Paul, J.D., Ph.D. [telephone interview on 1 September 2016]
- Political Analyst: WGN-TV, CLTV
- TV Host: 'Politics Tonight' (CLTV), 'Political Update' (Comcast Network), 'Newsmakers' (CNN Headline News), 'The Paul Lisnek Show' (WVON)
- Awards and Honours: Regional Emmy, Cablefax Award, Beacon Award for Best Series

Mai-Duc, Christine [telephone interview on 1 September 2016]
- Staff Writer (politics and breaking news): *The Los Angeles Times*

Siddiqui, Sabrina [telephone interview on 9 January 2017]
- Political Reporter: *The Guardian* U.S. (Washington D.C.)
- Political Analyst: MSNBC, CNN, BBC, Sky News

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The Rationale and Purpose of Research into Conflict Reporting, U.S. State-Media Relations, and the Iraq War Case Study

Globally, conflict reporting has undergone continuous development and transformation with the expansion and advances in technological abilities, varying media landscapes, and changing political settings. The media has the challenging role of obtaining, constructing, and presenting information about all aspects of a conflict for audiences across the world, but the information, or the 'facts', are seldom absolutely clear or definite. Political representatives, media personnel, and members of the public all have different perspectives, backgrounds, viewpoints, and ideologies, which can shape the way that government officials relay information about an event, the perspective from which a journalist writes a report and the register in which it is written, and the perceived message that audiences take from the story (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010; McLuhan, 2001). Despite this apparent lack of objectivity, this thesis will illuminate how the manner in which a conflict is reported, and the way in which information about conflict is presented within news stories, can have far-reaching consequences which can validate or justify a conflict and in turn impact upon the policy and longevity of military involvement (Gore, 2007; Altheide, 2006; DiMaggio, 2010; Thussu and Freedman, 2003; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Kull, Ramsay and Lewis, 2003). The close critical examination of conflict reporting is therefore vital, given the potential impact of this reporting on the conflict, public beliefs, and domestic and foreign policy.

Focusing specifically on United States state-media relations here will provide insight into the politics of conflict reporting, and how the narratives and content of conflict reporting were shaped and constructed. In conjunction with other important factors, such as the landscape and structure of media in the U.S., this study will argue that the U.S. administration and U.S. media were both highly significant active influencers of the Iraq

War conflict reporting. As journalists and media outlets are the platform for sharing news and government officials determine political and military decisions, these two interactive participants have significant capacity to shape and impact upon the news stories which are produced. In order to provide a thorough analysis of the factors which can impact upon conflict reporting, this thesis will explore how both the U.S. administration and U.S. media's independent agendas and strategies influenced the news, in order to assess how these separate interests in conjunction created unique state-media relations which directly affected Iraq War reports. This study of U.S. state-media relations will therefore build upon the existing research which establishes themes and content in Iraq War coverage, in order to provide an analysis of how the dynamics of this relationship shaped conflict reporting in this specific context.

The United States has been chosen as the focus of this research because the nation's involvement in conflicts and subsequent conflict reporting is often placed on a global stage, and thus has direct and widespread international significance. The implications of media stories produced within the boundaries of the United States are seldom confined to these domestic borders, but rather these reports are seen across the globe, and therefore foreign relations with different nations may be directly influenced as a result of U.S. conflict reporting (Spencer, 2005; Taylor, 2003). Since the reporting on U.S. involvement in conflicts depicts not only the events of the war, but also the perceived interests, agenda, and goals of the nation, this reporting can often directly affect the country's relations with both allies and enemies, and therefore the significance and impact of U.S. conflict reporting reaches well beyond its borders (Lievrouw, 2004; Richardson, 2007; Rutherford, 2004).

The primary focus and case study for this thesis is the 2003 Iraq War. This conflict has been selected because it presents an interesting and unique case for exploring the politics of conflict reporting and for examining how U.S. state-media relations distinctively shaped the themes which emerged from the reporting, such as the apparently one-sided coverage which largely supported and reiterated the U.S. administration's agenda and

narrative. It is vital to critically analyse past media coverage in order to understand the relevant factors which may continue to shape contemporary conflict reporting; therefore, the Iraq War provides a significant platform for further analysing more recent U.S. reporting. For example, this thesis will demonstrate how the Iraq War news coverage perpetuated several inaccurate misperceptions, and consider to what extent these inaccuracies were accepted in the public sphere, as a result of the news stories which reinforced them (Hewitt and Lucas, 2009; Thussu and Freedman, 2012; Kull, Ramsay and Lewis, 2003; Gershkoff and Kishner, 2005; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Monahan, 2010; DiMaggio, 2010). The detailed examination of Iraq War coverage will indicate how media reporting has developed and continues to function in the United States, which may be applied and provide context to understand contemporary media concerns and trends such as 'fake news' which similarly captures the struggle to discern fact from misperception in the media (Hunt, 2016). Therefore, the research and analysis in this thesis may have contemporary application for future research as it examines the many factors, including U.S. state-media relations, which may have influenced news stories and encouraged these reporting trends, and which may assist further researchers examine the development of contemporary media issues such as 'fake news'.

1.2 The Research Problem

A number of studies (Altheide, 2006; Berenger, 2004; Brinson and Stohl, 2009; DiMaggio, 2010; Gore, 2007; Rutherford, 2004) have examined the seemingly one-sided nature of U.S. media coverage before and during the Iraq War. As Chapter 5 will illustrate, these studies establish that this coverage primarily presented a singular perspective, provided incomplete facts, and often contained unproven claims. This literature suggests that a new practice developed in U.S. conflict reporting, where one-sided and framed stories dominate the news, often presenting the U.S. administration's message and agenda. Since the Vietnam War, a series of official restrictions have been placed on media personnel in order to manage information and narrative in conflict reporting, a trend

which has also become increasingly rigid over time (Bahador, 2007; Carruthers, 2000; Hoskins, 2004).

Several questions thus emerge: why was there an apparent increase in media regulations imposed by the U.S. administration, why did the U.S. media appear to largely comply with the restrictions placed upon them, and how did these U.S. state-media relations impact the politics of conflict reporting and news stories as a result? Therefore, this thesis will investigate to what extent the seemingly one-sided Iraq War news stories were shaped by the mutual, although often conflicting, interests of the U.S. government and U.S. media. This area of research will be explored through an examination of the strategies utilised by both the U.S. administration and U.S. media to pursue its own agenda and initiatives. It will seek to provide insight into this intertwined relationship, and thus ultimately consider how and why U.S. state-media relations can impact upon conflict reporting.

1.3 Research Objectives

The goal of this thesis is to critically examine the politics of conflict reporting and determine the factors which can impact these news reports. The principal research objective of this thesis is to provide insight into how U.S. state-media relations influenced Iraq War conflict reporting by unpacking the array of factors, interests, and strategies which contributed to this relationship, in order to determine how and why this interactive relationship impacted this coverage.

In order to fulfil this primary research objective, this study will first seek to highlight the specific strategies employed by the U.S. administration which shaped reporting. Some of these strategies will include formal regulations, such as restrictions to embedded journalists' access to conflict zones, as well as informal strategies, such as incentives for favourable reporting and threats to jobs for challenging the official narrative or presenting dissenting views. This thesis will consider the implications of these strategies and to what extent they influenced the content of the news stories, as well as highlight why these

various strategies were an essential priority of the U.S. administration. By so doing, this thesis will seek to determine to what extent the U.S. administration influenced conflict reporting. This thesis will also highlight the strategies of the U.S. media in order to determine how the U.S. media specifically impacted Iraq War reporting. The strategies which will be considered will include the media personnel's navigation and resistance of the restrictions imposed upon them by the U.S. administration, as well as the strategic selection of a particular narrative frame to present within a report. This thesis will thus seek to fulfil the principal research objective, and provide insight into the politics of conflict reporting and how U.S. state-media relations impacted Iraq War conflict reporting, by examining how the strategies utilised by both the U.S. administration and U.S. media were concurrently significant in impacting the themes and content of news stories.

1.4 Research Question and Sub-Questions

This thesis will analyse the politics of conflict reporting and the impact of U.S. state-media relations upon Iraq War coverage by considering the different interests of both the U.S. administration and U.S. media and by examining the array of strategies utilised in order to fulfil these interests. This thesis will therefore not only discuss to what extent the Iraq War conflict reporting was affected by U.S. state-media relations, but also reveal why both the U.S. administration and U.S. media had an interest in employing these strategies and seeking to impact on or control information and narratives in the news.

The primary research question which this thesis seeks to explore is:

- To what extent did the independent interests and the relationship between the United States administration and United States media influence the conflict reporting during the pre-invasion period and 2003 Iraq War?

To address this main research question, the following sub-questions will be explored:

1. What were the strategies used by the United States administration which impacted upon conflict reporting immediately before and during the 2003 Iraq War?

2. What were the strategies utilised by the United States media which affected the news stories before and during the 2003 Iraq War?
3. What are the implications of the strategies employed concurrently by the United States media and administration and this relationship on Iraq War conflict reporting?

The first sub-question will consider the types of strategies implemented by the United States administration during the pre-invasion period and the Iraq War in order to influence the information, narrative, and construction of news stories. This research sub-question will address the growing presence of U.S. government control and restrictions of media during times of conflict in order to present information from an angle and perspective which support its military and political agenda (Altheide, 2006; Brinson and Stohl, 2009; Connelly and Welch, 2005; DiMaggio, 2010; Gore, 2007; Rutherford, 2004; Gershkoff and Kushner, 2005; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003). The next sub-question will examine the strategies utilised by the United States media during the pre-invasion period and Iraq War which impacted upon news stories, in order to consider the array of strategies employed by the U.S. media to meet its own interests and priorities. Addressing this question will entail consideration of how the economic interests of the U.S. media as a business motivated strategic framing and navigation of the restrictions and regulations which the U.S. state placed on the U.S. media. The third research sub-question will examine to what extent the strategies utilised by both the U.S. administration and the U.S. media concurrently influenced the Iraq War conflict reporting. Through the exploration of this question, this thesis will assess how the independent interests and relationship between the U.S. government and U.S. media influenced Iraq War reporting, thus providing insight into the politics of conflict reporting and the impact of U.S. state-media relations.

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis will begin with a Literature Review which will illuminate and provide a critical analysis of the key debates around conflict reporting which will be drawn upon

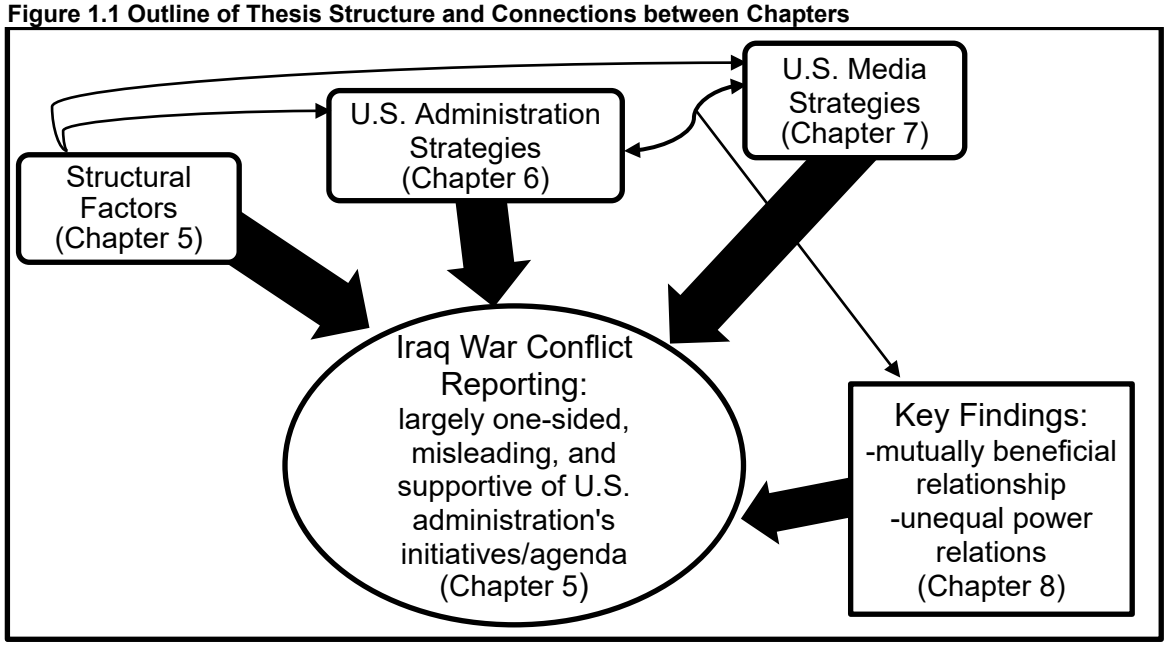
throughout this thesis, highlight the gap in this existing research and the contribution to knowledge, and outline the conceptual framework for this study. The next chapter will describe the methodology employed for this research by outlining the methodological approach chosen, and explaining how and why this is the most appropriate approach for this study. It will also explain how the use of secondary research has been deployed, as well as the primary research methods, participant selection, data analysis, and potential interview biases.

Chapter 4 will provide context and background for the Iraq War case study, by analysing the developments in conflict reporting and U.S. state-media relations from the Vietnam War to the Gulf War. Examining and contextualising the politics of conflict reporting and how the U.S. state-media relationship has developed and changed, as well as its impact on conflict reporting, will thus provide the groundwork on which the rest of thesis will build. Chapter 5 will then contextualise the Iraq War itself, by examining the reasons and causes of the Iraq War and the U.S. media's structural factors, and then will critically analyse the content of the pre-invasion period and Iraq War conflict reporting. Considering the structural factors will be particularly relevant for the following chapters in order to build a picture of the landscape of the U.S. media, which may have not only impacted conflict reporting but also supported or promoted the implementation of U.S. administration and U.S. media strategies. This chapter will also be a crucial component for subsequent chapters to draw upon by forming a reference point for the key themes and features of the reporting content, in order to assess how they were impacted upon by these strategies, and by U.S. state-media relations.

Chapter 6 will analyse the specific formal and informal strategies of the U.S. administration, followed by Chapter 7 which will examine the strategies of the U.S. media, and thus address the first and second research sub-questions respectively. These chapters will explore to what extent these strategies and independent interests directly shaped the Iraq War conflict reporting, and will provide the research basis for the conclusions and analysis of findings in Chapter 8. These chapters will draw from Chapter

5 in order to consider the role that the structural factors of the U.S. media played in the employment of these strategies, as well as refer to the specific themes and features of the conflict reporting context, in order to demonstrate how these strategies may have directly impacted upon the Iraq War coverage. Chapter 8 will highlight the key findings discovered in the exploration of U.S. state-media relations and how the independent strategies and interactive relationship between the U.S. administration and U.S. media impacted the Iraq War reporting. The key findings determine that not only was the Iraq War conflict reporting directly shaped by the U.S. state-media relationship, this interaction was mutually beneficial; however, unequal power relations also existed, all of which contributed to generating the apparently one-sided coverage. Chapter 8 will also examine the further implications of this influence, such as the impact of this coverage on public opinion and delayed military withdrawal. Chapter 8 will thus address the final research sub-question and the primary research question for this thesis by considering how and why the U.S. administration and U.S. media strategies, employed concurrently, directly impacted upon the key themes and features of the Iraq War conflict reporting, such as the emergence of principally one-sided coverage, and thus provide insight into the politics of conflict reporting and the dynamics and impact of U.S. state-media relations. An overview of the thesis structure and connections between chapters are summarised below in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Outline of Thesis Structure and Connections between Chapters



Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The following literature review will examine the key works and authors within the broad field of conflict reporting and outline the different debates within the existing field. While this review will note areas in which there may be debate and disagreement in the literature, the research does widely indicate that the careful study of conflict reporting is a crucial area of research. Laity (2005, p.275) declares quite boldly that conflict reporting is a deciding factor in the outcome of a war, and asserts that conflict reporting is "a weapon – and a very potent one", thus making it a crucial area of exploration. By discussing the characteristics of conflict reporting and the factors which can influence it, this review will provide a critical understanding of research and theorise about the debates established in the literature from which this thesis can then build. Throughout this examination of the existing research, this review will point to areas which will be particularly relevant to the research questions and which will be specifically drawn upon for this study.

This chapter will first discuss to what extent the existing literature can define conflict reporting. Then, the significance of conflict reporting will be discussed by examining different studies which consider the extent to which conflict reporting presents a comprehensive or misleading depiction of a war. The factors which influence conflict reporting will then be examined, including developments such as the rise of technology, and the use of images. The various potential strategies of states and media to influence conflict reporting will then be considered, and the review will detail how the different strategies exist in varying degrees, from mild to severe. The different types of state-media relations will then be discussed on a spectrum, from extreme state control and limited media independence, to minimal state control and significant media autonomy. This review will highlight how media ownership plays a role in determining these relations, as well as the debates in the literature which consider the impact of these different types of state-media relations on conflict reporting. The original theoretical contribution of this

project will be outlined by presenting the conceptual framework which combines the “propaganda model” and “agenda-setting theory”. Finally, the gap in the existing research will be highlighted in order to demonstrate how close critical analysis of this case study and related implications and findings will build upon the existing literature in this area of research.

2.1 Can Conflict Reporting Be Defined?

This section will assess the extent to which conflict reporting can be defined, and highlight variables which make it challenging for researchers to come to a consensus about how to define conflict reporting. While conflict reporting is discussed and analysed extensively throughout the existing literature, the research does not provide one concrete or explicit definition. Instead the literature describes an array of characteristics, purposes and aims which may be utilised to define or categorise conflict reporting. The literature acknowledges that because conflict reporting is not black and white, one central definition cannot necessarily be determined, as a result of several variables which can affect the defining characteristics and categorisation.

The conflict reporting discussed throughout the literature includes reporting on traditional wars, civil wars, humanitarian efforts, and borderless wars, such as the ‘war on drugs’ or ‘war on terror’ (Baum and Zhukov, 2015). All of these forms of war are inherently very different from one another, and hence begins to suggest why conflict reporting can be defined in many different ways. Additionally, several other variables can also impact how conflict reporting is categorised, such as the nations or groups involved in the conflict, how many nations or groups are involved in the war, the location of the conflict, the time period during which the conflict took place, and the available technology during the time of war (DiMaggio, 2010; Spencer, 2005; Connelly and Welch, 2005). Given the nature of these variables, perspectives and defining characteristics which shape the nature of a war and subsequent reporting, it is thus not possible for researchers to come to a consensus or present a single definition for conflict reporting. Researchers have

defined conflict reporting as a business endeavour, entertainment, a platform for state propaganda, and a space for reflection and critique. This section will examine these different, sometimes conflicting, definitions which have emerged from the existing literature.

2.1.1 Conflict Reporting Defined Primarily as a Business

Some of the literature (Richardson, 2007; Dorman 2006; Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010) categorise conflict reporting as primarily an institutional business endeavour for the media outlets. These researchers maintain that conflict reporting is a platform for media outlets to gain recognition, prestige, and attention, and assert that the media utilise conflict reporting to catalyse perceived success in their business, such as acquiring high viewership, readership, or ratings. Richardson (2007) specifically argues that because conflict reporting often mobilises readers and viewers, and gains greater attention in comparison to daily news stories, conflict reporting is a prime opportunity for media outlets to build upon this attention and take advantage of the business opportunity to cultivate a larger audience. This definition will be considered in Chapter 7 which explores the extent to which conflict reporting was utilised by the U.S. media outlets during the Iraq War in order to pursue various economic interests and the role that these business considerations played in driving the U.S. media's strategies.

2.1.2 Conflict Reporting Defined Primarily as Entertainment

Several researchers (Thussu and Freedman, 2003; Welch, 2005; de Landtsheer et al., 2014; Monahan, 2010; Spencer, 2005) build upon the assertion that conflict reporting is a platform for pursuing economic goals by defining conflict reporting as a piece of entertainment. This literature suggests that conflict reporting can aid both the institutional and individual media business interests because this reporting is predominantly constructed to be entertaining and to captivate audiences. For the media outlets, by providing entertaining and stimulating reports, these businesses are able to obtain higher

viewership, readership, or ratings, thus successfully pursuing institutional economic interests. For individual journalists, making the most of the 'entertainment factor' supports their goals of competing with other journalists for top stories and compelling reports. This literature also notes how conflict reporting can assist a government's interests, because as a piece of entertainment, conflict reporting can glorify or romanticise war, which can in turn generate support for a state's war agenda.

This literature (Thussu and Freedman, 2003; de Landtsheer et al., 2014; Monahan, 2010; Welch, 2005; Spencer, 2005) which points to the increasing emphasis on the 'entertainment factor' in modern conflict reporting highlights the growing prioritisation of coverage which captivates and stimulates audiences, often replacing in-depth analysis of a story. The 'entertainment factor' and its impact on conflict reporting will be a key feature discussed throughout this thesis and at length later in this chapter as a primary component of televised coverage, and will support this definition of conflict reporting.

2.1.3 Conflict Reporting as Propaganda

DiMaggio (2010; 2017) observes how conflict reporting can be characterised as a platform for state propaganda. DiMaggio (2010; 2017) asserts that during periods of war, journalists often rely heavily on official sources and tend to remain uncritical of the information they obtain which typically highlights only one angle and perspective. DiMaggio (2010; 2017) thus argues that conflict reporting which presents a largely one-sided perspective that supports the state's agenda and initiatives effectively serves as state propaganda, primarily by reiterating the official narrative. This definition may also be linked with the categorisation of conflict reporting as a business, as the research suggests that in some cases utilising official sources provides media outlets and journalists with a perceived legitimacy for obtaining information from state officials, who may be thought to have the most up to date and credible information about the conflict, which may in turn increase audiences or ratings (DiMaggio, 2010; 2017; Mermin, 2004; Laity, 2005; Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Richardson, 2007). Richardson

(2007) adds that conflict reporting can also provide a platform for a state propaganda, in presenting its initiatives, agenda, and goals. Because it gains heightened attention from the public, conflict reporting can serve a government's interests, because such reporting provides a government with a public forum to create a narrative which supports its intentions and aims for a war.

This definition of conflict reporting is particularly applicable for this case study, and in the exploration of the U.S. state-media relationship, this thesis will consider the extent to which the Iraq War conflict reporting served as state propaganda. Miller and Sabir (2012) provide a definition of 'propaganda' which specifically pertains to how terrorism is communicated and reflected. This definition will be relevant and appropriate to consider for this thesis, and will therefore engender an analysis of apparent propaganda in the coverage following the September 11th attacks which continued throughout Iraq War coverage. Miller and Sabir (2012, p.79) assert that "in practice, descriptions in play are themselves tainted by their involvement in or relationship with legitimation strategies ('propaganda'). It is precisely these strategies that ought to be at the centre of studying propaganda today...Propaganda is more than a question of communication or ideas or discourses. It is a communicative practice, in that it requires and can only be enacted by humans in specific social relations...something which can enable certain interests to be advanced and others limited". This thesis will consider this definition as it builds a critical analysis of U.S. conflict reporting and explores the impact and links between Iraq War propaganda and the strategies and interests of the U.S. administration and U.S. media.

2.1.4 Conflict Reporting as Critique

Some researchers directly contest the definition which categorises conflict reporting as a platform for state propaganda and instead define conflict reporting as a space for reflection, debate, and critique, which encourages differing perspectives to be considered and analysed. Silverstone (2007) argues that conflict reporting provides a platform for critique and conversation to consider various perspectives and opinions about a conflict.

Thompson (1995) adds that conflict reporting produced by embedded journalists in particular creates immediacy which can provide a forum for various perspectives, including military representatives, local civilians, and foreign state officials. Schechter (2003) adds that conflict reporting can ideally create an opportunity to consider military agendas and counter-agendas, which can provide a conversation about the various options, strategies, and potential outcomes for a war. Thus, these researchers characterise conflict reporting as a space for conversation and debate, offering an array of viewpoints, narratives, and debates which provide a well-rounded and thorough perception of a conflict.

The type of conflict reporting examined by these researchers does appear to encourage open reporting, and indeed, alternative viewpoints may typically be seen in state-media relations which appear in independently owned media structures with high levels of media autonomy, which will be discussed later in this chapter. These researchers therefore highlight the potential of conflict reporting to provide immediacy during a war and a platform on which military initiatives, foreign policy, and the war agenda can be discussed, debated, and scrutinised.

The existing literature defines conflict reporting with several, sometimes contradicting, characterisations, although there are also many correlations and overlaps throughout these definitions. Conflict reporting can only be defined with this wide spectrum of categorisations because of the many variables and factors which can influence it, and this issue will be discussed throughout this review. When assessing the Iraq War conflict reporting and the U.S. state-media relations which impacted this coverage, it will be most appropriate to draw primarily from a combination of the definitions which suggest that conflict reporting is a business endeavour, a piece of entertainment, and a platform for state propaganda. As the literature has demonstrated, a singular definition of conflict reporting may not necessarily provide a complete depiction, and thus it is appropriate for

this study to utilise a mixed definition which considers these different components and variables. The next section will build from this array of conflict reporting definitions in order to analyse and critique the significance of conflict reporting.

2.2 Critiques of Conflict Reporting

As there is such variety in the definitions and categorisations relating to conflict reporting, the impact of conflict reporting continues to be a topic which is debated. This section will thus consider how conflict reporting reflects the events and nuances of a war. The existing literature tends to coalesce into two conflicting positions; one which argues that conflict reporting depicts a comprehensive view and understanding of a war, and another which asserts that conflict reporting is primarily misleading in the way it represents a conflict.

2.2.1 Conflict Reporting Provides a Clear Depiction of a War

The literature which argues that conflict reporting represents a comprehensive depiction of a war appears to build upon the definition which categorises conflict reporting as a space for open critique and reflection. Thompson (1995) argues that conflict reporting presents clear representations and information about a war because it provides an opportunity for transparency and debate. Conflict reporting, specifically when it pertains to embedded journalists who are reporting from the conflict zone, can create visibility about a war that would not otherwise be possible without this type of reporting. Kunkel (2003) agrees that embedded journalists are an essential component for media outlets to be able to communicate information about the war, and therefore journalists reporting from a conflict zone are indispensable for a fully developed understanding of the intricacies of a conflict. These researchers argue that conflict reporting allows viewers to better see into a conflict and allows readers to hear the stories from the front lines and from military and state representatives.

Otto and O'Meyer (2012) build upon this research, which supports the assertion that conflict reporting is an important tool for communicating clear information about a war, and add that conflict reporting can even promote conflict prevention. Otto and O'Meyer (2012) discuss how media coverage during a pre-war period, when tensions between nations and the possibility of a war are building, can often create awareness that addresses issues before they escalate to military action or a war itself. Specifically in terms of humanitarian issues, conflict reporting can signal a growing issue and draw attention to potential human rights violations, which can spark public awareness and a call for action (Otto and O'Meyer, 2012; Robinson, 2002; Spencer, 2005). Several other researchers (Monahan, 2010; de Landtsheer et al., 2014; Bahador, 2007) also suggest that conflict reporting can help draw attention to tensions or crises so they may be addressed diplomatically before they have accelerated to military action. For this reason, these researchers emphasise the potential for conflict reporting to provide transparency in order to assist in preventing or halting the escalation of a conflict.

2.2.2 Conflict Reporting is Largely Misleading

While some researchers note the potential for conflict reporting to provide clear and comprehensive information about a war and the different interests and perspectives involved in a conflict, much of the existing literature largely contests this assertion in practice and instead argues that conflict reporting often tends to present a limited or singular perspective of a conflict without addressing dissenting views or highlighting an array of perspectives. Consequently, these researchers disagree that conflict reporting is a space of transparency and debate, and instead highlight the extent to which conflict reporting provides a misleading or inaccurate depiction of the war.

Taylor (2003) and Bourdieu (1998) assert that conflict reporting often does not provide a completely accurate representation of a war and contend that conflict reporting instead can be misleading because it tends to provide a small-scale or limited perspective of a war. Ghosh (2003) adds that embedded journalism in particular can perpetuate a

misleading depiction of a conflict, because these reporters are often assigned to one military station and only obtain a small glimpse into a conflict, and are thus unable to compile a thorough account of a war as a whole, or obtain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the action they witness. Therefore, these researchers directly contest the assertion that embedded journalism creates transparency and instead argue that conflict reporting can be misleading because of the inherently limited perspective a reporter obtains.

The literature (Kellner, 2004; Ghosh, 2003; Monahan, 2010; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003) also contends that inaccurate accounts of a conflict can be produced as a result of an emphasis on entertaining and dramatic footage which is often apparent in conflict reporting coverage. This position draws on the literature which categorised conflict reporting as a piece of entertainment earlier in this review. These authors claim that modern conflict reporting often focuses on entertaining or romanticised narratives and depictions of war, and consequently the reports are reduced to a portrayal of a war that does not always provide insight or analysis into the intricacies of the conflict. This literature asserts that emphasising entertaining footage often presents a limited or singular perspective because the primary goal of the conflict reporting is to captivate audiences rather than to provide in-depth analysis or debate about the military strategies, war initiatives, or political implications of the conflict (Ghosh, 2003; Monahan, 2010). Collectively, these researchers argue that journalists' limited glimpse into a war in combination with an emphasis on entertaining news results in coverage that provides incomplete information, does not invite debate or critique, and presents a narrow view of a war which does not promote alternative viewpoints or narratives. As a result, this literature asserts that conflict reporting does not necessarily offer a well-rounded or completely accurate portrayal or a conflict.

Kamalipour (2004) draws on the definition which argues that conflict reporting is primarily a platform for state propaganda and asserts that conflict reporting tends to predominantly reflect and support the state's perspective and agenda. Kamalipour (2004,

p.89) asserts that “in order to achieve their goals, government and military leaders, aided by the mass media professionals, displace reality with fiction, fact with symbolism, and truth with propaganda. Indeed, truth is always the first casualty of war”. Consequently Kamalipour (2004) concludes that conflict reporting often depicts a misleading representation of a war because this singular viewpoint is generated through the use of specifically chosen language and narratives, which largely represents the state’s agenda and does not promote debate, critique, or alternative viewpoints. Ghosh (2003) and Steuter and Wills (2010) build upon this assertion and consider how conflict reporting can actually promote war, because stories which are often created to be entertaining and stimulating can be misleading, and inaccurately depict the success or downplay damage caused by the war in order to support the state’s agenda for continued military action.

This critique of conflict reporting is particularly relevant for this thesis which will argue that one-sided news stories which largely presented the official narrative and ignored alternative viewpoints were a key theme apparent in the Iraq War conflict reporting. The examination of the politics of conflict reporting in this case study will thus build from this debate when assessing the extent to which U.S. state-media relations and the arguably unequal power relations shaped this theme apparent in the content of news stories. The next section will begin to review the various factors which can influence conflict reporting.

2.3 Factors Influencing Conflict Reporting

The existing literature points to the growth of technology as one of the leading factors which has influenced, shaped, and changed conflict reporting. The literature examined below argues that conflict reporting was directly affected by rise of technology and that the type of media, including print, television, and online, has significant impact upon conflict reporting in distinct ways. This section will highlight several consequences of each of these types of news sources and consider the different debates among researchers who theorise about the implications of technology and type of media on conflict reporting.

This section will then discuss the significant impact of the use of images, which is present throughout each of these different types of media.

2.3.1 Types of Media

This section will examine three different types of media: print, television, and internet, and highlight the different debates within the literature which question how conflict reporting is influenced in distinct ways by each of these forms of media. For the purpose of the case study for this thesis, this section will only review these three media types, as social media was only just developing during the time of the Iraq War and therefore will not be considered as part of the conflict reporting in this study.

2.3.1.1 Print Media

Reah (1998) and Richardson (2007) observe how the rise of the printing press allowed news to be more readily published, and daily newspapers became a standard practice for conflict reporting. Rather than receiving updates of a conflict days or even weeks after events took place, the inception of newspapers provided an outlet which could afford readers with more up-to-date information, more quickly, keeping the public much more informed about the conflict taking place. Reah (1998) and Richardson (2007) theorise that because newspapers created a new opportunity for audiences to receive daily updates, the public could obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the progress, political implications, military strategies, and initiatives of a war as the conflict took place.

While Reah (1998) and Richardson (2007) highlight the efficiency with which newspapers could provide more timely updates, McLuhan and McLuhan (2011) note a potential issue created by the rise of daily newspapers. McLuhan and McLuhan (2011, p.23) state that newspapers are inherently “totally discontinuous and totally unconnected” as a result of the 24-hour period between editions, and are therefore not entirely able to present a complete view of a conflict. McLuhan and McLuhan (2011) contend that the

time between newspaper issues is too long to stay up-to-date with the fast-paced and continuously changing nature of conflicts, and therefore newspapers often can only present highlights of the conflict without providing enough analysis or discussion which connects each story together. Thus while Reah (1998) and Richardson (2007) observe how the development of print media created a platform for more up-to-date conflict reporting, McLuhan and McLuhan (2011) suggest that the time it takes to publish print media still presents too much of a gap between editions which influences how comprehensively conflicts can be reported. The next section will discuss the rise of televised media and examine the extent to which TV coverage addresses this issue of immediacy.

2.3.1.2 Televised Media

Several researchers argue that the creation of the television was a significant factor which influenced conflict reporting and which continues to have a substantial impact throughout modern warfare. These researchers (Hallin, 1986; Bahador, 2007; Frank and Osgood, 2010; Spencer, 2005; Mowlana, Gerbner and Schiller, 1992; German and Lally, 2014; Hoskins, 2004) observe how the rise of televised media changed the landscape for conflict reporting as it became the platform for coverage on which the public most heavily relied. Bahador's (2007) research finds that in 1962, when televised news was first beginning, only 29% of people relied on television as the primary and most trusted source for news about conflicts, compared to 81% in 2001. The public has therefore become more acclimatised to real-time, continuous updates and the expectation of immediacy and urgency in reporting. German and Lally (2014) add that even with the rise of the internet, television remains a key source of conflict reporting, and the traditional newspaper as a primary source for information continues to decline largely due to the disconnected nature of print news and its inability to produce stories as quickly or continuously as television or online news. As a result, conflict reporting has been transformed by this shift, in which television has become a primary outlet for the public to obtain information.

Some researchers such as Gowing (1994) and Cohen (1987) build upon the critique which argues that conflict reporting provides a clear depiction of the war and assert that the emphasis and focus on televised conflict reporting is a constructive shift which supports and encourages a more comprehensive understanding of a war. These researchers argue that television promotes transparency and precision in reports because television can provide frequent and up-to-date information, immediate footage of a conflict, and a platform to hear debates about policy, strategies, and agendas. This literature asserts that television coverage is more transparent because it offers more room for debate and critique compared to print media, which cannot provide as much conversation about the various elements of a conflict. Therefore, Gowing (1994) and Cohen (1987) argue that because television presents a forum that can offer up-to-date coverage which considers the different debates and perspectives about a war, TV coverage provides conflict reporting with a platform to present comprehensive and well-rounded information about a war.

Other researchers (Hallin, 1986; Kamalipour, 2004; Morgan, Lewis and Jhally, 1992) disagree that television creates transparency and instead draw from the critique which asserts that conflict reporting can present a misleading representation of a war. This literature argues that while televised conflict reporting may be widely consumed and trusted, it does not necessarily offer the most accurate or well-rounded information. Morgan, Lewis and Jhally's (1992) research analyses the beliefs held by those who obtain news from television in relation to other sources and provide statistics which reveal that television often appears to leave individuals misinformed about a conflict. Morgan, Lewis and Jhally (1992, p.225) conclude that their "data suggested that television seemed to confuse more than to clarify...the correlations between TV watching and knowledge were mostly negative". Hallin (1986) similarly asserts that front line coverage does not always create a clear account or depiction of a war because even though television presents increased visibility, it is misguided to assume that this footage provides a comprehensive presentation of a conflict, as a result of the limited perspective embedded journalists can

obtain. This thesis will build upon the arguments of these researchers by assessing the politics of conflict reporting and the factors which contributed to generating a seemingly misleading representation and narrative during the Iraq War, and will determine that televised reporting was one factor which appeared to contribute to this misleading coverage.

Another factor which researchers consider when analysing the impact of television on conflict reporting is the rise of the 24-hour news cycle, which the literature argues is significant because it changed the rate at which news was reported and the amount of information which would have to be produced. Though it may appear that 24-hour news would offer an even more transparent and informative platform for transmitting information, many researchers express concern about its impact on conflict reporting and argue that the 24-hour news cycle can often be more confusing for audiences because it generates an oversaturation of information which does not allow the viewer to process or analyse the report. Kamalipour (2004, p.92) asserts that “one of the ironies of the information age is that it has become increasingly difficult to distinguish between reality and unreality. More information, distributed at the speed of light, does not necessarily lead to a more informed or engaged public...[and] creates an environment in which an average individual becomes confused, often unable to sift through a sea of news and information”. Hoskins and O’Loughlin (2010) add that this oversaturation of news and constant flow of information can make it nearly impossible for an individual to analyse or digest reports. Cushion and Lewis (2010), Allen et al. (1994), and Bourdieu (1998) similarly note that 24-hour news reports can be convenient for viewers to catch up on quick sound bites, headlines or routine updates, but the speed and repetition of the news is not conducive to understanding the depth of a conflict and its many intricacies, policy, strategies and agenda. As a result of the 24-hour news cycle, these researchers suggest that conflict reporting can often be reduced to a confusing and sometimes misleading representation of a conflict. This thesis will examine the validity of this claim and consider how the 24-

hour news cycle contributed to several of the themes apparent in the Iraq War conflict reporting.

Drawing from the literature's definition of conflict reporting primarily as a business endeavour, many researchers (Monahan, 2010; Bourdieu, 1998; Hoskins, 2004; Bahador, 2007; Thussu and Freedman, 2003; Gore, 2007) theorise that the expectation to fill 24 hours of news broadcasting, in combination with television outlets' and reporters' economic interests, such as ratings and constant competition from other networks and journalists, promotes focus on the 'entertainment factor'. These researches observe that the 'entertainment factor' directly impacts upon conflict reporting, because it creates an emphasis on entertaining news rather than stories which are analytical and in-depth and which thus may lose the viewers' attention. For example, these news reports may place more focus and attention on human interest pieces about soldiers or stories of heroism and sacrifice, in lieu of deeper analyses about the intricacies of political issues or military strategies. Consequently, these authors argue that the 'entertainment factor' reduces conflict reporting to simple stories which provide little information, analysis, or depth, and instead are intended to maintain the interests of the audience, in order to pursue economic goals such as increased ratings or readership. Thus this literature asserts that focus on entertainment is heightened in response to the rise of the 24-hour news cycle and the need to maximise and appeal to audiences, even if this could result in conflict reporting being trivialised with sensational images and reports which lack context or analysis about the political implications or war policy and strategy. Petley (2004, p.164) summarises this observation by concluding that "contemporary media representations of warfare are marked by a glaring paradox" because audiences are often left with little accurate or in-depth information about a conflict even though "modern media technology has the potential to permit us to see more details of warfare than ever before".

This literature does note the potential for televised coverage to have constructive impacts on conflict reporting, such as offering timelier and more regularly updated information on a platform which creates the possibility to discuss several perspectives,

strategies, and debates. However, these researchers have observed factors such as the rise of 24-hour news and the 'entertainment factor' which both directly impact conflict reporting but also appear to encourage coverage which can be misleading in its depictions of the war by prioritising entertainment over depth of analysis. Televised news coverage was a major source of information during the Iraq War and therefore these potential issues with televised conflict reporting will be crucial elements considered in this thesis. The next section will highlight the literature which discusses how the internet has also impacted conflict reporting.

2.3.1.3 Online Media

The literature also suggests that the rise of the internet has changed the scope and production of conflict reporting, and several researchers argue that the internet has influenced conflict reporting by providing an alternative platform where different perspectives, narratives, and debates about a conflict can be presented, creating the opportunity for a more comprehensive understanding of a conflict. Shirky (2011), Gladwell and Shirky (2011), and Howard et al. (2011) argue that the internet opens up the news sphere for independent news outlets and individuals to voice opinions, beliefs, and debates which may not be present in mainstream media, and through online news platforms, the internet has provided a new and alternative space for conflict reporting. Kyriakopoulou (2011) and Kalathil and Boas (2001; 2003) also note that the internet has given a voice to those who live in oppressed or restricted nations, namely in state-owned media systems, who would otherwise be limited to the state-controlled mainstream media. With the internet, these authors argue, these groups and individuals are able to create or engage with new independent media outlets which may share different perspectives, beliefs, and debates about a conflict.

Dimitrova et al. (2005) and Kovarik (2002; 2016) also contend that the internet is a constructive influence on conflict reporting because the consumer is in charge of seeking information and has access to an extensive choice of perspectives and debates that may

present alternative viewpoints to the mainstream media. For this reason, Dimitrova et al. (2005) conducted a study which compared online news forums with mainstream print and televised media, and concluded that the internet constructively impacted the conflict reporting, because it presented a larger spectrum of viewpoints and perspectives which analysed the war, policy initiatives, military strategy, and political implications. Therefore, Dimitrova et al. (2005) contend that the internet can provide a platform for communicating news and opening up debate, which in turn provides an even larger arena to obtain information about a conflict.

However, these researchers do note that the internet can create some problematic consequences on the accuracy of conflict reporting (Shirky, 2011; Gladwell and Shirky, 2011; Howard et al., 2011). These authors acknowledge that online news outlets will not always be thoroughly fact-checked and may still present one-sided information, which only represent the opinion of the particular outlet or individual publishing the story. Although Dimitrova et al. (2005) and Kovarik (2002; 2016) believe the internet can be utilised as a platform for more objective conflict reporting, these researchers also note that there are limitations to this expectation because of the potential for biases. Despite the internet providing a space for more voices, narratives, and perspectives to be heard, online news forums may still be dominated by the interests of the outlet, which consequently may not represent an array of viewpoints or present debates. Thus, online news may not necessarily always offer a completely well-rounded account of a conflict and may still be subject to a limited or incomplete depiction of a war. It may therefore be challenging to determine which of these new internet platforms are legitimate conflict reporting outlets that have been fact-checked, and which are intended to be opinion pieces or have not been thoroughly researched.

Nonetheless, the literature contends that conflict reporting has been directly impacted by the internet which can arguably provide a greater choice of information, viewpoints, and debates, and make these more easily available. Though a relatively new phenomenon at the time, mainstream news outlets did provide online reports for the Iraq

War, and therefore online news will also be considered and analysed as a part of the examination of conflict reporting in this thesis. Thus, the potential impacts of the internet on conflict reporting will be relevant for this study. The following section will discuss the use of the image, present within all three of the different types of media, and examine to what extent images can impact upon conflict reporting.

2.3.2 The Use of Images

As the researchers discussed, the type of media can impact conflict reporting in very different ways, but one commonality within all of the types of media is the use of images, which the literature asserts influences conflict reporting in powerful ways. The use of images is a particularly relevant area of research for this thesis, and the subsequent chapters will build upon this examination by specifically considering how the use of images contributed to generating the themes in the Iraq War conflict reporting.

Berenger (2004), Bahador (2007), and Culbert (2005) describe how print, televised, and online conflict reporting can often be highly image focused, and assert that because pictures or video clips appear to offer a firsthand glimpse into a war, the use of images is a very influential element of conflict reporting. This literature argues that images influence conflict reporting by directly shaping the message and viewpoint of a news story in significant visual ways, and Horvit (2004) argues that conflict reporting tells the story of war through images. However, several researchers (Berenger, 2004; Bahador, 2007; Hoskins, 2004; Foster, 1999; Taylor, 2010) contend that a report which heavily relies on images and appears to offer a visual glimpse into a war does not necessarily make a more informed news story. These authors argue that although images may appear to create wider visibility and information about a conflict, they do not actually provide more information or insight into a conflict, but rather, may actually contribute to a degree of distortion or confusion. Hoskins (2004) observes that images are often left largely unexplained and unanalysed, or that the commentary or caption attached with the image typically does not offer a coherent or critical discussion. Foster (1999) and Bahador

(2007) similarly note how an image tends to present one view or perspective of a war, and though this image can be very impactful in shaping a narrative, it is difficult for one image to tell an entire story.

Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2010) and Schechter (2003) describe how the extensive and continuous flow of images throughout the different media types can be confusing and disorienting for audiences; as a consequence, audiences are often unable to make sense of all of the images in order to fully understand the intricacies of a conflict. Many researchers (Connelly and Welch, 2005; Foster, 1999; Berenger, 2004; Hoskins, 2004; Taylor, 2010; Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010; Schechter, 2003) also note the close link to the 'entertainment factor', which often manifests itself in conjunction with the use of images. Images within all types of media are often chosen with the purpose of catching the attention of the audience and may present a shocking image of a war zone, a heroic effort by a soldier, or a saddening depiction of displaced civilians, but these images tend to evoke an emotion or visceral reaction rather than provide insight or analysis into a conflict, and indeed may have been chosen for this reason. The literature has thus argued that images can be captivating and intense, and provide a visual glimpse into war which can shape the message and narrative of the coverage, and therefore, the use of images can be considered as closely related to framing. 'Framing theory' will be highlighted as an element of this study's conceptual framework, and the use of images will be explored throughout this thesis as one of the components which contributed to the framing and themes apparent in the Iraq War conflict reporting. This thesis will examine the Iraq War framing at length and the various factors within the politics of conflict reporting which contributed to the extensive use of images, and consider how and why these specific images and frames were chosen.

This section has examined how the rise of technology created different avenues and platforms for conflict reporting, including print, television, and online media, and how

these various types of media, in conjunction with the use of the images, can significantly impact upon conflict reporting. This analysis will be deployed in the Iraq War case study, to facilitate a greater understanding of how the type of media and use of images specifically influenced this coverage. The next section will continue a discussion about the factors which influence conflict reporting and explore the potential impacts of the state and the media.

2.4 State and Media Strategies Which Can Influence Conflict Reporting

This section will first examine official and unofficial strategies of the state and consider how these can impact conflict reporting, and then discuss how the media can influence conflict reporting through strategic framing. This assessment of the potential strategies to influence conflict reporting will allow this thesis to build upon these debates in order to analyse how and why conflict reporting was shaped during the Iraq War by state-media relations and the specific interests and strategies of the U.S. administration and U.S. media which shaped this relationship. 'Strategy' has been purposefully chosen to categorise the decisions and behaviours of the state and media because this thesis will consider 'strategies' which can be deliberately employed in order to control, impact, and shape the content of conflict reporting.

2.4.1 State Strategies to Influence Conflict Reporting

The literature points to several potential strategies of the state which may have an impact on conflict reporting. Some of the strategies can be categorised as ‘official’ and ‘formal’, and denote concrete strategies such as acts of governance, federal regulations, or official guidelines in journalists’ contracts. ‘Unofficial’ and ‘implicit’ strategies will refer to the intangible strategies employed by states, such as placing implied pressures or incentives on journalists for compliance and dependability to report or withhold certain information in order to support the state’s broader agenda and initiatives. Some strategies

appear to be mild while others are more severe, and this review will consider a variety of possible strategies along this spectrum which may influence conflict reporting.

2.4.1.1 Official and Formal Strategies

With the rise of technology, and in particular as a response to the creation of televised news, researchers discuss how restrictions placed upon journalists and media outlets are a primary state strategy to influence conflict reporting, and these regulations can take several different forms (Connelly and Welch, 2005; Graber, 2003; Richardson, 2007). Official guidelines vary by nation, conflict, and media outlet, however typically they can limit reporters' access to a specific area of the conflict, permit journalists to only speak with certain official military personnel, and place restrictions upon the information which journalists are allowed to report (Connelly and Welch, 2005; Graber, 2003; Richardson, 2007).

Graber (2003) specifically describes how states can require embedded journalists to go through formal media training and sign contracts prior to entering a conflict zone. Such processes outline codes of conduct for reporters while reporting from a war. Richardson (2007) and Connelly and Welch (2005) suggest that these regulations can limit journalists' access to witnessing different zones of the conflict and therefore only expose them to one glimpse of the war. These researchers contend that as a result of official regulations, reporters can often struggle to share widespread perspectives or information about a conflict because of the limited access to different areas of a war. Graber (2003) builds upon this assertion and describes how these guidelines can limit journalists to only reporting certain information, which, in combination with the security considerations of the military, often results in only partial or incomplete coverage of an event. Consequently, conflict reporting may not present a comprehensive perspective or complete story. Because these restrictions often limit journalists to primarily interviewing official military representatives, reporters' ability to obtain a wide range of viewpoints,

opinions, and narratives can be severely curtailed (Connelly and Welch, 2005; Graber, 2003; Mowlana, Gerbner and Schiller, 1992; Richardson, 2007).

The researchers note that while a state's official restrictions can directly affect the scope and information of reports in conflict scenarios, official guidelines are often regularly practiced by the state, in order to manage security threats and ensure reporters comply with security regulations. While these regulations may vary in severity, state guidelines and restrictions are an inescapable element of conflict reporting which can impact upon the production and content of news reports (Thompson, 1995). The official guidelines specifically implemented by the U.S. administration during the Iraq War will be explored in Chapter 6. This thesis will consider to what extent these were utilised as strategies by the U.S. administration to influence the news coverage. Of specific relevance to this thesis will be the official regulations which limited journalists' access and ability to utilise a range of sources, and placed restrictions upon the information which was allowed to be reported. The next section will discuss the unofficial strategies which a state can employ, which, unlike official regulations, are not necessarily present in all types of media systems.

2.4.1.2 Unofficial and Implicit Strategies

The research observes how the state can also employ unofficial or implicit strategies which may influence conflict reporting. Wartime can often create a state of uncertainty and instability which can result in the public and journalists turning to its leaders for a voice, guidance, and information. The literature defines this as the ‘‘politics of fear’’ and discusses how state leaders can utilise the ‘‘politics of fear’’ in order to obtain the focus and attention of journalists who turn to them for guidance and information (Altheide, 2006; Richardson, 2007; Berenger, 2004). Thus, the state can influence conflict reporting by utilising the ‘‘politics of fear’’ as a means of establishing the official state narrative and perspective as the primary voice in the news reports.

The research specifically points to incentives and threats to journalists' jobs and reputations as unofficial strategies which a state can utilise in order to influence conflict

reporting by placing unspoken and implicit pressure upon reporters and media outlets to report information and perspectives which align with the state's official narrative (Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Richardson, 2007). Hakanen and Nikolaev (2006) and Richardson (2007) describe instances where journalists have been harassed, called traitors, or accused of being biased, for publishing a story which contradicted the state's aims or narrative, and provide examples of reporters losing jobs after releasing reports which challenged the state's agenda or assertions. Richardson (2007) also notes that a state can impose threats or incentives directed at the media's access depending on the narrative of a report, which may thus influence the conflict reporting by deterring the media from reporting critically of the state and its agenda. Collectively, this literature highlights the existence of an unofficial incentive system for journalists to report favourably of a state's aims, initiatives, and policy during a conflict, with the possibility of being rewarded with better access to conflict zones or to official personnel for interviews. On the most severe degree of the spectrum, Aslam (2015), Elliot, Elbahtimy and Srinivasan (2012), and Leyton and Herrara (2011) note that in certain cases, a state's unwritten pressures and threats are not just limited to jobs or reputations, but to the wellbeing of the journalist. This literature describes how these reporters who challenge the state's narrative or authority may be vulnerable to arrest, physical violence, or even death threats. In these extreme instances, the researchers describe how a state may utilise these severe threats in order to influence the journalists' and media outlets' reports, and thus impact conflict reporting.

Depending on the type of system and media ownership, these unofficial strategies and implicit guidelines and pressures vary in severity from mild to severe, in a similar way to the official regulations. The most severe unofficial strategies tend to present in state-owned media systems, which the next section will demonstrate typically yield state-media relations in which conflict reporting is largely controlled by the state with little autonomy given to media outlets and journalists. However, this thesis will reveal how some of the more severe unofficial strategies, such as implicit pressures and threats to jobs,

reputation, and access, were also apparent during the Iraq War, despite the U.S. media being formally independent of the state. Chapter 6 of this thesis will thus consider to what extent the U.S. administration influenced Iraq War conflict reporting through both the official and unofficial strategies, before then examining the strategies of the U.S. media. Taken together, these elements can provide a discussion of the politics of conflict reporting through the analysis of U.S. state-media relations by examining how these strategies, employed concurrently, influenced the Iraq War coverage. This review will next examine the ways in which the media can have an impact on conflict reporting by examining the strategy of framing.

2.4.2 Media Strategies to Influence Conflict Reporting

The literature argues that narrative framing is a primary strategy utilised by the media to influence conflict reporting, and that the media's ability to frame the perspective of a story indicates strategic choices that the media can make (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000; Dimitrova et al., 2005; Tankard, 2001; Berenger, 2004; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Carruthers, 2000; Bahador, 2007). 'Framing theory' has been advanced by several researchers, and describes how the selection and creation of frames in conflict reporting is a routine practice for journalists (McCombs, 1997; Wanta, 1997; Entman, 1993; Gitlin, 2003; Iyengar, 1991; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; Tuchman, 1979; Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000; Dimitrova et al., 2005; Gamson, 1996; Tankard, 2001). Framing theory is also a component of the conceptual framework for this thesis, which will be examined later in this chapter.

Entman (1993, p.52) defines framing as "select[ing] some aspects of a perceived reality and mak[ing] them more salient in a communicating text". Dimitrova et al. (2005, p.26) adds that "framing stems from a process of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration by the news organization. For instance, in a case of war, the media can select to focus on the destruction of war as opposed to freedom from tyranny, can frame the event as an invasion versus attack, can emphasize the victims versus invaders, and can

highlight a positive versus negative attitude toward the war". Framing theory has been analysed extensively, and these researchers note how various perspectives on the same conflict or idea can be shaped with numerous different frames. Monahan (2010, p.22) highlights how "there are people (reporters, anchors, editors, producers, guest bookers, and so on) whose job requires them to choose what should be included in the news and how it should be covered. The actions of these individuals -- referred to as news workers -- determine not only what will become news but how that news will be organized and presented to the public...'news' are a tangible reflection of the media's decisions about how to frame and present the who, what, when, where, why and how of a particular issue or event". These researchers indicate how the media make conscious choices about the specific selection and angle to place on information, and thus in turn, the media's choice of a frame will directly influence conflict reporting.

Researchers note how in some instances the media primarily relies on official sources, which directly impacts the frame of a report due to the limited scope of sources for obtaining information about a conflict. This literature observes that overreliance on official sources promotes frames which tend to exclusively present one perspective and narrative, typically reflective and supportive of the government viewpoint and initiatives, which can limit coverage and make it appear one-sided or misleading (Berenger, 2004; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; DiMaggio, 2010). The research contends that journalists and news outlets can choose to build their reports around interviews and press conferences with official sources, and therefore have an impact on the conflict reporting by publishing stories which are primarily shaped by these voices. By relying heavily on official sources, the literature asserts, the media frame will predominantly represent political elites and eliminate dissenting views or debate with alternative opinions (Berenger, 2004; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Carruthers, 2000). Overreliance on official sources has thus been critiqued by researchers as a contributing factor to the misrepresentation or narrow frame of information, which will be further analysed in the following section and which this thesis will demonstrate was a key theme of the U.S. media coverage of the Iraq War. This thesis

will also build upon the literature by theorising why this overreliance occurred in this case study, by considering the U.S. media's economic interests which may have motivated the predominant reliance on official sources.

Other researchers describe how the media can build a frame which considers several perspectives, viewpoints, and debates, and which tends to provide a more comprehensive and well-rounded account and analysis of the conflict. The literature (Connelly and Welch, 2005; Steuter and Wills, 2010; Robinson, 1999; 2002; Mermin, 1999) describes how the media can choose to seek out alternative sources or publish frames which challenge and critique the official narrative. By drawing from alternative sources and viewpoints which offer a variety of perspectives and opinions, the literature asserts that the media can thus influence conflict reporting and the messages which are published about a war (Connelly and Welch, 2005; Steuter and Wills, 2010; Robinson, 1999; 2002; Mermin, 1999; Andersen, 2005; O'Neill and O'Connor, 2008).

In addition, the literature emphasises how language and images are significant components of framing and the specific choices made by a journalist or news outlet can directly impact the frame of a narrative. Richardson (2007), Kamalipour (2004), and Steuter and Wills (2010) discuss the power of language and the image, and how these two factors are always active and go through a process of purposeful selection by journalists and media outlets. Reah (1998) and Richardson (2007) assert that specific wording can be used to frame information, for example how using the word 'soldiers' or 'rebels' create different connotations and meanings, despite describing the same group of people. As highlighted in the previous section, images can also be significant tools which shape a message and present a specific perspective and viewpoint, however, they can also be inherently one-sided and it is challenging to try to encapsulate all the dynamics of a conflict in that image (Berenger, 2004; Bahador, 2007; Hoskins, 2004; Foster, 1999; Taylor, 2010). Thus, while specific language and images can be powerful components of framing, they may contribute to constructing misleading narratives which highlight one

perspective and do not always provide a comprehensive analysis or depiction of the conflict.

Collectively, this literature widely argues that the media's ability to select and publish a specific frame can directly influence conflict reporting, as information, language, and images are purposefully chosen and designed to shape a specific message. Framing is a theme and media strategy which will be drawn upon throughout this thesis and explored as a significant component of the Iraq War conflict reporting, as well as a primary strategy of the U.S. media largely driven by its economic interests, which the next section will begin to address. Framing is also closely connected to the type of media ownership and state-media relationship, which the following section will illuminate in more detail. The next section will thus build upon this analysis of the independent strategies of the state and the media by considering the different types of state-media relations which can influence conflict reporting.

2.5 Types of State-Media Relations and the Impacts on Conflict Reporting

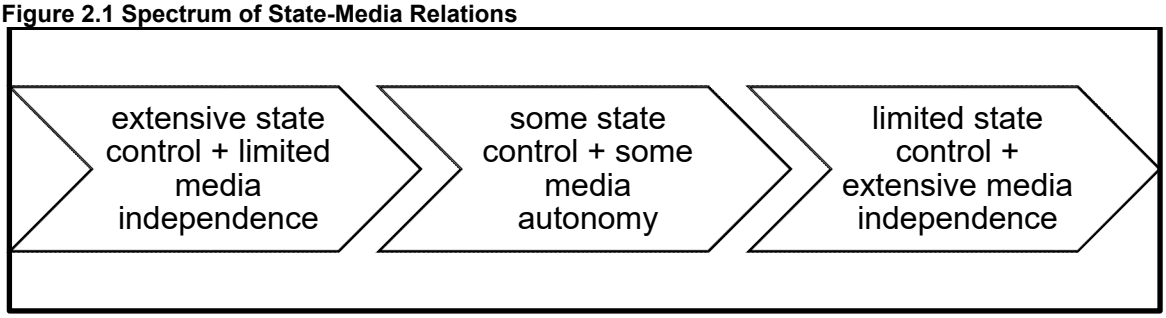
Dimitrova et al. (2005, p.24) declare that "never is the umbilical cord between media and government more tightly connected than in times of crisis". This section will explore this claim and discuss how the various state and media influences in conjunction with each other form a spectrum of state-media relations. This section will then discuss the impacts of the different types of state-media relations on conflict reporting.

2.5.1 Types of State-Media Relations

The literature discusses a range of state-media relations which can vary greatly depending on several variables such as the nation, political party or individual in power, time period and access to technology, and media ownership. Therefore, this section will discuss the various types of state-media relationships by utilising the spectrum in Figure 2.1, which at one end indicates state-media relations where there is limited media

independence and severe state control, to the other end of the spectrum which points to state-media relations with a largely autonomous media and minimal state control.

Figure 2.1 Spectrum of State-Media Relations



The types of state-media relations are closely related to media ownership structures, and thus this section will break the analysis of state-media relations into first a discussion of state-owned media systems and then corporate-owned and independently owned systems. These ownership structures have several fundamental differences, and by discussing them separately, this review aims to provide clarity about these differences, as well as to illustrate to what extent the characterisations of different state-media relations along this spectrum are apparent in different types of media ownership.

2.5.1.1 State-Owned Media Systems

State-owned media systems tend to produce state-media relations which fall to the left side of this spectrum, as the power is predominantly with the state to extensively control the media. In the most extreme cases, the media can be utilised as an extension of the state's initiatives and agenda, giving journalists and outlets little autonomy or independence (Becker, 2004; Halpern, 1994; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; DiMaggio, 2017; Kern and Hainmueller, 2009). This state-media relationship therefore tends to yield the most severe degree of state strategies through regulations, such as closely managed access, censoring of specific information or footage, and threats to jobs and wellbeing of journalists, if the media does not act in accordance with the parameters and rules of the state (Berenger, 2004; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Halpern, 1994; Aslam, 2015; Elliot, Elbahtimy and Srinivasan, 2012; Becker, 2004; Leyton and Herrara, 2011). In order to

avoid these severe implicit pressures and threats, outlets and journalists often abide by the official and unofficial regulations, such as primarily utilising official sources. State-owned media can therefore often yield the most extreme levels of state control and most limited media independence, to the far left of the spectrum in Figure 2.1, when the media exists to be an extension of the state with minimal autonomy, enforced through these severe strategies (Berenger, 2004; DiMaggio, 2017; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Richardson, 2007; Aslam, 2015; Elliot, Elbahtimy and Srinivasan, 2012; Leyton and Herrara, 2011; Carruthers, 2000; Becker, 2004; Halpern, 1994).

However, state-owned media systems do not always produce this extreme state control, and in some instances, state-media relations in these systems can also fall more towards the middle of the spectrum. Many researchers note how the rise of technology, in particular the availability of the internet, has generated a shift in the relationship between the state and the media in traditionally state-owned media systems. New opportunities for online news forums and social media have created a space for groups and individuals who would typically be subject to primarily state-controlled media; thus in some instances, the state-media relationship has shifted because it has become more difficult for the state to maintain complete autonomy over the media as a result of internet news platforms (Kalathil and Boas, 2001; 2003; Kolmer and Semetko, 2009; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Berenger, 2004). However, within state-owned media systems, mainstream media still tend to be heavily state-controlled and limit media independence. Nevertheless, online media forums and platforms have created an opportunity for new media sources to begin to gain autonomy within state-media relations which traditionally tended to limit the media's ability to report independently of state interests.

2.5.1.2 Corporate-Owned Media Systems

The literature also considers how the state-media relationship in a corporate-owned media system tends to fall along the middle of the spectrum, but, despite being formally independent from the state, can sometimes resemble characteristics of state-

owned media (Tumber and Palmer, 2004; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Walgrave and Rucht, 2010; Robinson, 2001; DiMaggio, 2010; 2017; Spencer, 2005; Rutherford, 2004; Berenger, 2004; Richardson, 2007). As the U.S. is a predominantly corporate-owned media system, the dynamics of this state-media relationship will be primarily considered for the case study within this thesis.

The literature notes that in some instances, considerably restrictive official regulations to access of the conflict zone and limitations to access of sources are enforced by the state, despite the media being formally independent and autonomous (Connelly and Welch, 2005; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Rutherford, 2004; Spencer, 2005; Richardson, 2007). Similarly, the literature observes that unofficial restrictions, threats, or incentives, such as pressure to appear patriotic, threats to jobs, or incentives for access, can also occur (Monahan, 2010; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Rutherford, 2004; Thussu and Freedman, 2003). These state regulations have the ability to impact the autonomy and freedom of the media, influence to what extent the media act independently, challenge this formally open media system, and shift the balance of power to the state. One of the aims of this thesis will be to unpack the U.S. state-media relationship in order to understand the factors which shaped and encouraged the apparent unequal power relations, which will be a key finding in this thesis.

The research does note that compliance on the part of the media to give up some of its autonomy may be a result of the media's economic interests, as outlets must be responsive to their corporate owners, who in many cases can be closely tied to the political elite (Dimitrova et al., 2005; Reah, 1998; DiMaggio, 2010; Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010). The desire to appear legitimate and credible, particularly pertinent to the case study in this thesis, can also encourage a heavy reliance on official sources, which creates a media dependence on the state officials for information (Richardson, 2007; Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010; DiMaggio, 2010; 2017; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Laity, 2005; Mermin, 2004). In addition, when a small number of corporations own the majority of media outlets, DiMaggio (2010), Schultz (1998), and Baker (2007) argue

that there will not be a great deal of variance amongst media outlets and conflict reporting will tend to appear uniform. Baker (2007) and Hitchens (2006) note that even if media outlets are owned by a large number of corporations, though there may be a greater degree of variation amongst media outlets, corporate media ownership can influence each media outlet individually based upon each owner's interests. Spencer (2005, p.15) thus concludes that the "impact of media conglomerates seeking to dominate output...has helped to shape a climate which has had a number of potentially damaging effects on the processing and distribution of information," such as how "corporate promotion encourages journalistic self-censorship. News is pulled towards entertainment formats and human interest themes in order to capture audience interest...Packaging and branding become more important than information and content".

This type of state-media relationship therefore appears to correlate with the research which categorises conflict reporting as primarily as a piece of entertainment, as well as platforms for the media to pursue its business interests and for the state to promote its propaganda. The research speculates that the media's business concerns may offer insight into why a media that is formally independent of the state and has the autonomy to gather information from alternative source can sometimes resemble the state-media relations typically seen in state-owned media systems, towards the left of the spectrum in Figure 2.1. This thesis will build upon this literature by considering how the specific interests of the U.S. administration and U.S. media are intertwined and concurrently shaped the state-media relations, as well as the ways in which it impacted the Iraq War coverage.

2.5.1.3 Independently Owned Media Systems

State-media relations in systems which tend to be primarily independent of any state or corporate ownership exhibit dynamics which can vary greatly from the state-media relations discussed previously. The research thus points to this state-media relationship on the far right of the spectrum in Figure 2.1, in which the media largely

functions autonomously and independently and the state exerts limited control over the media (Tumber and Palmer, 2004; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Walgrave and Rucht, 2010; Robinson, 2001; Robinson et al., 2010).

The literature has highlighted how state restrictions can range on a spectrum from degrees of mild to severe, and in the case of this type of state-media relationship, mild state regulations would tend to be implemented, which would help maintain the media's autonomy and independence from the state. As described by the literature, these mild state regulations may include official restrictions for embedded journalists which may only consist of relatively unrestrictive security and safety considerations, rather than limiting journalists' ability to gather information or obtain an array of viewpoints (Connelly and Welch, 2005; Graber, 2003; Mowlana, Gerbner and Schiller, 1992; Richardson, 2007). This state-media relationship would not typically include some of the more severe implicit regulations, such as threats or incentives to motivate coverage which would support the state's agenda and narrative, the impact of which will be discussed in the next section (Altheide, 2006; Richardson, 2007; Bahador, 2007).

This section has illustrated how state-media relations can occur on a spectrum and how these relationships are influenced by the type of media ownership. From extreme levels of state control typically seen in state-owned media, to varying degrees of media autonomy and independence seen in corporate and independently owned media, there are many variables which can impact upon state-media relations, and this thesis will aim to build upon the literature by examining the intricacies of U.S. state-media relations during the Iraq War, in order to determine the factors which shaped this relationship and the implications on the politics of conflict reporting. The next section will discuss the specific impacts of these various types of state-media relations on conflict reporting.

2.5.2 Impact of Different Types of State-Media Relations on Conflict Reporting

The literature which will be highlighted in this section describes how the impacts of different state-media relations on conflict reporting also exist on a spectrum and vary by degree, depending on the combination of the different factors examined throughout this review, including the role of technology and the type of media, state and media strategies, and the type of media ownership. This section will thus continue to consider Figure 2.1 to discuss how conflict reporting is impacted by the different levels of state-media relations across this spectrum.

This section will first discuss the impact of state-media relations on the left side of the spectrum in Figure 2.1, extreme state control with limited media independence, typically apparent in state-owned media. The previous section described how this relationship yields extensive state control over the media through state strategies such as official restrictions and implicit pressures and threats. Strict regulations about access to the conflict zone as well as restrictions on information, in combination with pressures, threats, and incentives to jobs or wellbeing, can often result in a heavy reliance on official sources and pressure to report narratives which align with the agenda and initiatives of the state (DiMaggio, 2010; Carruthers, 2000; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Richardson, 2007; Robinson, 2002). These researchers assert that closely regulating and limiting the scope of sources can directly impact conflict reporting because the frame in a news report will tend to reflect the official narrative and not represent other perspectives. Consequently, the state can monopolise the information and narrative of conflict reporting and act as a powerful influence on this coverage. The research thus suggests that state-media relations where the state has extreme control can often lead to singular perspectives in conflict reporting, which results in reports that tend to only present the official narrative and do not include dissenting opinions, critique, or debate, and therefore can be potentially misleading (Kern and Hainmueller, 2009; Becker, 2004; Kalathil and Boas, 2003; Brown et al., 1987; Bullock, 2008).

DiMaggio (2010) notes that there is nothing inherently wrong with using official sources, but when official sources dominate the media space the conflict reporting can misinform its audience and fail to portray a complete or well-rounded account of a conflict, or offer debates and oppositional opinions about the state's military aims, foreign policy, and agenda. Walgrave and Rucht (2010) and Snow and Taylor (2006) add that even when there is a substantial oppositional movement, this type of state-media relationship still tends to result in the media neglecting to cover these perspectives if it would challenge or undermine the state's initiatives and standpoint. This suggests that state strategies, such as the extreme threats or the incentive system which can be evident in this type of state-media relationship, can deter journalists and outlets from actively seeking or reporting dissenting views which may critique or challenge the official narrative. Other researchers (Berenger, 2004; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; DiMaggio, 2010; Carruthers, 2000; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Mermin, 2004) also suggest that primarily citing official sources tends to produce conflict reporting which only tells a small part of the story and offers limited information, insight, or images which have been strategically chosen to shape a specific narrative, while other facts may be purposefully left out. As a consequence, the media reaffirm the state's position and agenda, which then remains uncontested or questioned, because oppositional viewpoints or information which would interfere with the state's aims remain unreported.

The literature (Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Ghosh, 2003; Hiebert, 2003; Tumber and Palmer, 2004) also observes that as a consequence of more severe restrictions, embedded journalists are often are limited to a specific area and are only able to interview specific military personnel, which can contribute to embedded reporters producing coverage which only presents a narrow glimpse into a war. Ibish (2003, p.1) specifically illustrates that although embedded journalists are often perceived to offer accurate information about a conflict, this is seldom the case when "military, in turn, knows exactly where each reporter is at all moments. Anyone begging to be embedded must first agree to engage in self-censorship about information deemed sensitive...Embedding can

provide fascinating frontline reports, but couldn't possibly produce an accurate sense of the overall state of affairs, let alone what it is like on the other side of the conflict. It eases one painlessly into promoting, rather than actually covering, the war". The control which the state exerts over the media in this type of state-media relationship can therefore directly influence the information and frames within conflict reporting, as a result of combinations of media ownership, state strategies such as official guidelines or implicit pressures and incentives, the media's heavy reliance on official sources, and reluctance to oppose the official narrative. The definition which categorises conflict reporting as a platform for state propaganda thus closely correlates with this type of state-media relationship, when the state has the power and capacity to monopolise control of conflict reporting and the specific information and footage published.

Moving towards the middle of the state-media relations spectrum in Figure 2.1, researchers have observed that despite being formally independent from the state, state-media relations in corporate-owned media systems can in some cases have similar characteristics and impacts to those in state-owned medias (Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Tumber and Palmer, 2004; Walgrave and Rucht, 2010; Robinson, 2001; DiMaggio, 2010; 2017; Spencer, 2005; Rutherford, 2004; Berenger, 2004; Richardson, 2007). Considering this type of state-media dynamic and its impact on conflict reporting will be the focus of this thesis. In this state-media relationship, the literature in the previous section highlighted how the state can seek to control the information and narratives of the conflict reporting by restricting journalists or media outlets, both formally, through official regulations, and informally, through unofficial pressures such as threats to jobs or incentives for access, all of which, this thesis will argue, was apparent in the Iraq War reporting. The research asserts that as a result, corporate-owned media can sometimes appear as an extension of the state when the media complies with the interests and agenda of political elites, and remains widely uncritical of the state despite being officially independent (Bowles, Hamilton and Levy, 2014; DiMaggio, 2010; 2017; Spencer, 2005; Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Mermin,

1999; Robinson, 2001; 2002; Walton, 2010). In these instances, the state can exert greater influence on conflict reporting by enforcing a considerable amount of formal restrictions and implicit regulations on the media which promote publication of the official narrative. This state-media relationship can thus contribute to producing conflict reporting which is largely one-sided and predominantly supportive of the state, themes which are typically evident in state-owned media systems. These are key issues which this thesis will seek to unpack in the Iraq War case study in order to understand why and how primarily one-sided reporting and unequal power relations in the U.S. state-media relationship appear to have been generated.

As the previous section also highlighted, corporate-owned media is often significantly driven by economic considerations, which is another theme which will be explored in the case study for this thesis. Many researchers (Thussu and Freedman, 2003; Welch, 2005; de Landtsheer et al., 2014; Monahan, 2010; Spencer, 2005; Hoskins, 2004; Bahador, 2007; Cushion and Lewis, 2010; Richardson, 2007; Schechter, 2003) consider how intense competition amongst journalists and media outlets to be the first to break a story or provide new information and the latest developments, in combination with the pressures of a 24-hour news cycle, can discourage thorough fact-checking or analysis. This literature also describes how sometimes stories may be published even if they are not yet complete, as a result of this competition and pressure. Spencer (2005) and Cushion and Lewis (2010) also point to how pressure for journalists to meet deadlines can influence conflict reporting, because the demanding schedule may force journalists to submit incomplete or unconfirmed reports. Additionally, the overreliance on official sources can be further reinforced when the media are concerned with appearing legitimate and credible (Richardson, 2007; Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010; DiMaggio, 2010; 2017; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Mermin, 2004; Laity, 2005). These authors thus indicate that these pressures and focus on economic interests can have a significant and direct effect on conflict reporting. Because the business considerations of the media can result in one-sided, rushed, or unfinished conflict news reports, the corporate-

ownership structure may contribute to generating conflict reporting which is not always entirely accurate or well-rounded, themes which this thesis will also argue were key components of the Iraq War coverage and which will be explored further in order to provide insight into the politics of conflict reporting and how U.S. state-media relations specifically impacted on this coverage.

Finally, moving towards the far right of the state-media relations spectrum, the literature discusses how state-media relations which exhibit higher degrees of media independence and less state control can impact conflict reporting in a very different way. This type of state-media relationship is one where the state may only impose mild regulations, few, if any, unwritten pressures, threats or incentives, and the media actively seek wide range of sources and narratives. Arguably this promotes more well-rounded and comprehensive conflict reporting which includes varied perspectives and open debate (Spencer, 2005; Tumber and Palmer, 2004; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; DiMaggio, 2010). The research suggests that with this type of state-media relationship, conflict reporting can flourish as a platform for open debate, critique, and conversation, because the media is not subject to rigid restrictions or concerned about underlying consequences for seeking alternative viewpoints which may challenge the state (Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; DiMaggio, 2010; Walgrave and Rucht, 2010; Robinson et al., 2010). This literature describes how these various independent media outlets can often be in conversation and open dialogue with each other, which encourages analysis and debate of the various perspectives being presented.

In this state-media relationship, the frames presented in conflict reporting may still align with the state's agenda and narrative in some instances, but the research (Berenger, 2004; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Walgrave and Rucht, 2010) observes that news reports will tend to compliment official sources or narratives with alternative sources. As a result, in addition to the official commentary, conflict reporting may concurrently present narratives which directly challenge, critique, or debate the initiatives and agenda of the state. While the media will not typically be exclusively critical of the state and can

favourably discuss the initiatives and perspective of political elites, researchers also note that the media within this state-media relationship can also sometimes be quite harsh and unforgiving of the state's stance or agenda (Tumber and Palmer, 2004; Berenger, 2004; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Walgrave and Rucht, 2010; Mowlana, Gerbner and Schiller, 1992). Hoskins (2004) and Walgrave and Rucht (2010) also remark that the alternative perspectives available in independent media systems extend to the images that are published within conflict reporting, some of which may support the state and its agenda, while others may portray political elites or the conflict itself in a more critical light.

Though conflict reporting in this type of state-media relationship may be less restricted, many researchers (Spencer, 2005; Bennett, 2003; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; DiMaggio, 2017) note that it is impossible to expect there to be zero bias in conflict reporting. Although it may be unintentional, media representatives have personal beliefs, priorities, or ideas which may influence their news stories, and therefore conflict reporting, in any system or within any state-media relationship, cannot be presumed to be completely neutral. Similarly, despite the opportunity and tendency for independent media outlets to report more openly, this literature notes that the 'politics of fear' may still impact independently owned outlets, which creates a heavier reliance upon official sources, and therefore it cannot always be assumed that independent media outlets will offer an alternative or completely well-rounded account of a conflict. However, the research does theorise that in state-media relationships where the media maintains autonomy and the state does not impose more than mild regulations, conflict reporting can provide a wider variety of information and perspectives (Spencer, 2005; Tumber and Palmer, 2004; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; DiMaggio, 2010; 2017; Bennett, 2003).

On the whole, this research has indicated that the type of media ownership and state-media relationship are also closely related to framing theory and can directly impact how the conflict reporting narratives are framed. The literature suggests that a state-owned media tends to primarily produce frames constructed by political elites, while frames in an independently owned media system can be shaped by alternative sources

and represent several narratives and perspectives. However, some media systems where the media is formally independent from the state still produce conflict reporting which is largely one-sided and supportive of the state, such as in the case of the U.S. coverage of the Iraq War. Chapter 7 will closely examine the U.S. media's strategic framing, which will facilitate this study's assessment of the politics of conflict reporting and how U.S. state-media relations contributed to generating the themes of the Iraq War reporting, such as the tendency for journalists to frame narratives which supported the U.S. administration's agenda. The next section will outline the conceptual framework which this thesis will utilise in the examination of this case study.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

This section will outline the unique conceptual framework that this thesis will employ in order to analyse the U.S. state-media relationship and the politics of Iraq War conflict reporting. This conceptual framework will draw from Herman and Chomsky (1988), and utilise the "propaganda model," which is introduced as a structure for considering and analysing how news stories are produced. This study's conceptual framework will combine the "propaganda model" with "agenda-setting theory" which has been defined and discussed within several key studies (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007; McCombs, Shaw and Weaver, 2014; Wanta, Golan and Lee, 2004; Scheufele, 2000; Roberts and McCombs, 1994; McCombs and Shaw, 1972; 1993; Matsagani and Payne, 2005; Cobb and Elder, 1983; McCombs and Reynolds, 2008). By concurrently utilising the propaganda model and agenda-setting theory, this study will examine the relationship and the independent interests of the U.S. administration and U.S. media through an original and distinctive lens, thus making a theoretical contribution as well as contributing specific findings to the existing research in this area.

2.6.1 Propaganda Model

2.6.1.1 Origins and Explanation of Model

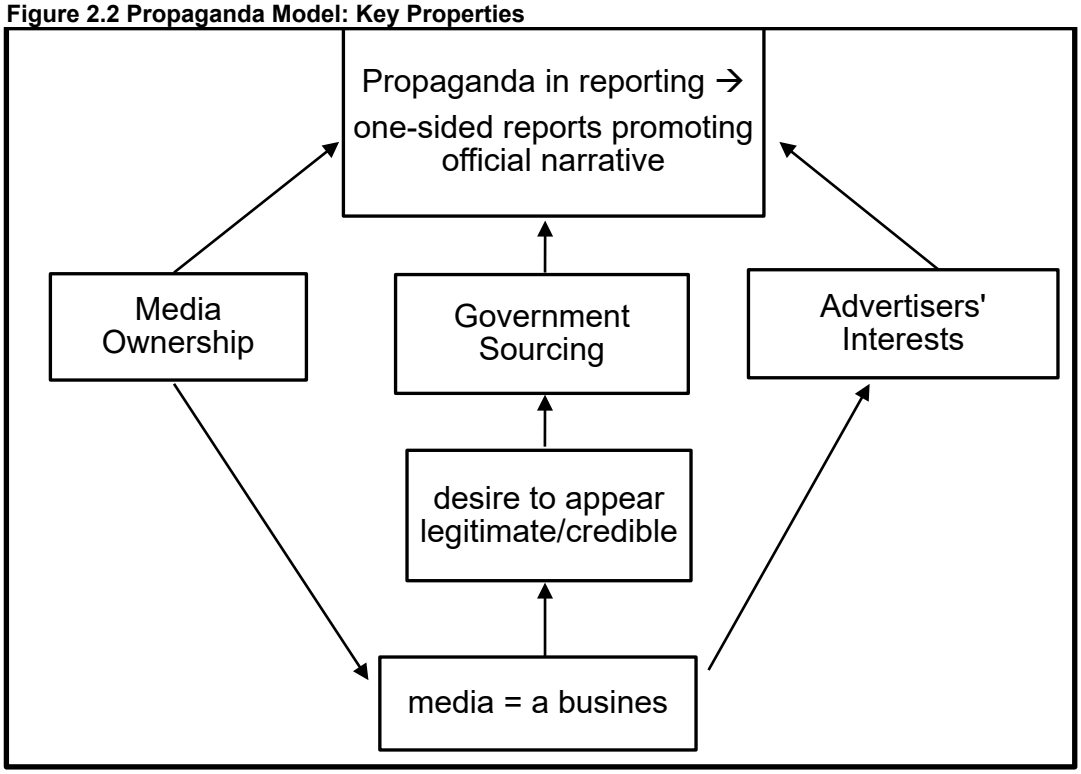
Herman and Chomsky's (1988) "propaganda model" was originally developed for the era of Cold War reporting. It considers how news stories are constructed, reflecting on the accuracy of the information presented in conflict reporting as a result. The propaganda model provides a framework for analysing media in the United States and considers how propaganda exists in news stories within a media landscape which is officially independent from the state. Herman and Chomsky (1988) assert that propaganda is a reality within United States reporting and therefore dissenting views within media are seldom heard. Debate within media is therefore limited and lacks multiple perspectives, with the official narrative often the most widely published.

Herman and Chomsky (1988) characterise the U.S. media as a business pursuing economic incentives and interests, such as obtaining high ratings, readership, or viewership statistics. As highlighted in the existing research (Richardson, 2007; Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010; DiMaggio, 2010; 2017; Laity, 2005; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Mermin, 2004), a media source may prioritise appearing to be legitimate and credible in order to pursue its business objectives, which Herman and Chomsky (1988) argue leads to the media functioning primarily as propaganda for the state. Herman and Chomsky (1988) point to media ownership, government sourcing, and advertisers' interests as the three major factors which generate the propaganda model, and produce news stories which tend to promote and drive forward the state's narrative and agenda. The authors tested U.S. conflict reporting through these three components in order to draw conclusions about the existence of propaganda in the U.S. media. Herman and Chomsky (1988) determined that the U.S. media's corporate ownership assisted in creating heavy reliance on government officials for information and the need to adhere to advertisers' interests in order to maintain funding and access, and remain successful, relevant, and perceived as credible. This model therefore considers how the close links between the corporations and the U.S. government have a direct impact on conflict reporting and contribute to news reports which emphasise the U.S. administration's agenda, and therefore perpetuate the perspective of the state.

In recent publications, Herman and Chomsky have directly applied the propaganda model to the ‘war on terror’. The authors theorise that the ‘anti-communism’ propaganda of the Cold War has been replaced with ‘counter-terrorism’ rhetoric, and both are perceived to threaten democracy and its freedoms and security in similar ways. The ‘war on terror’ is characterised as a battle of ideologies, represented as United States western democracy versus non-western anti-democracy, and the Cold War conflict was presented in much the same manner. The news stories during both conflicts appeared to be propagandised and to reflect either ‘anti-communist’ or ‘anti-terrorist’ narratives which aligned with the administration’s agenda and initiatives, with minimal dissenting views included.

Propaganda will be a central concept within this thesis. It will be mobilised in order to critically analyse the Iraq War conflict reporting, and therefore it is necessary to establish a framework which considers the extent to which propaganda is evident in U.S. media. Other key researchers, such as DiMaggio (2010; 2017), have also extended the application of the propaganda model in order to analyse the ‘war on terror’ period of journalism, and explore how media ownership and use of official sources played a role in the production of propaganda in the U.S. media system which is formally independent from the state. This thesis seeks to establish how many of the assumptions and observations of Herman and Chomsky’s original propaganda model, such as the media’s business interests to garner large audiences or the heavy reliance on government sourcing, were evident during the Iraq War coverage, and therefore this conceptual model is both relevant and applicable for this study. The key properties of the propaganda model which will be utilised for this study’s conceptual framework have been summarised in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 Propaganda Model: Key Properties



2.6.1.2 Limitation of Model

Herman and Chomsky (1988) appear to create their conceptual model already working with the assumption that propaganda is an inherent element in United States conflict reporting, and therefore do not necessarily test if propaganda actually exists, or consider instances where it may not be present or fit within their propaganda model. However, given the comprehensive research and literature which provides extensive statistics and examples of propaganda in U.S. conflict reporting, it may be reasonable and justified for Herman and Chomsky (1988) to construct their propaganda model using the supposition that propaganda is an established norm in U.S. conflict reporting. Much of the literature which will be examined in Chapter 5 provides data which points to the existence of propaganda and one-sided narratives reflecting the opinions and agenda of the administration specifically in the case of the Iraq War, and therefore it will be argued that the propaganda model can legitimately be employed within this thesis, as the existence of state propaganda in these news stories is clearly demonstrated and evidenced

(DiMaggio, 2010; Dimitrova et al., 2005; Berenger, 2004; Kull, 2003; Rutherford, 2004; Thussu and Freedman, 2003; Miller and Sabir, 2012).

The propaganda model primarily theorises about the media's impact on conflict reporting as a result of its business interests and how the nature of the U.S. media landscape assists in perpetuating state propaganda. While Herman and Chomsky (1988) do consider the role that the state plays in perpetuating its agenda and propaganda through the media, this framework tends to analyse the existence of propaganda primarily from the angle of the media, rather than considering the U.S. administration and its independent interests or how the state-media relationship impacts conflict reporting. Thus, this model is principally media-centric in its approach. The next section will therefore offer a complementary theory to be employed in combination with the propaganda model. Enhancing the propaganda model with "agenda-setting theory" will provide a more comprehensive and well-rounded framework which will facilitate a close critical examination of the politics of conflict reporting by considering the impact of the state and media's interests concurrently.

2.6.2 Agenda-Setting Theory

2.6.2.1 Origins and Explanation of Model

"Agenda-setting theory" originally developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972) hypothesised that the media is a powerful entity which has the ability to influence political agenda, and this theory has since been widely utilised and expanded by researchers examining conflict reporting (Berkowitz, 1992; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007; McCombs, Shaw and Weaver, 2014; Wanta, Golan and Lee, 2004; Scheufele, 2000; Roberts and McCombs, 1994; Matsagani and Payne, 2005; McCombs and Shaw, 1993; Cobb and Elder, 1983; McCombs and Reynolds, 2008). Agenda-setting theory originally theorised that the media does not reflect reality, but rather filters and shapes it (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; 1983; McCombs and Weaver, 1997; Berkowitz, 1992). This theory emphasises the power of the media to formulate the type and amount of information

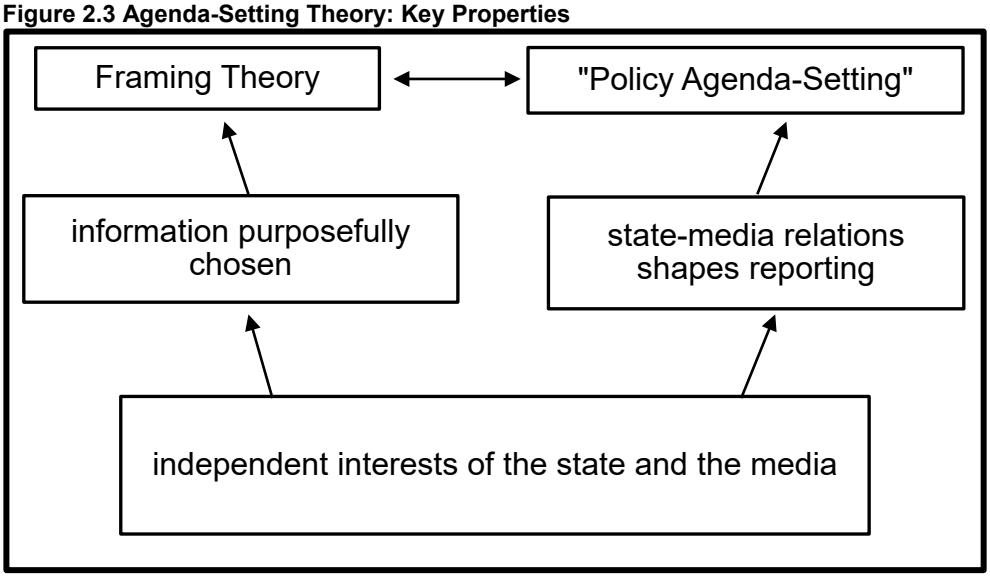
supplied in the context of conflict, and the subsequent version of reality which emerges as a result. Berkowitz (1992) specifically argues that the media does not only create definitions for issues in the news, but also frames interpretations of these issues. This thesis will follow this model and emphasise the power of the media to impact policy, for example, when considering how the reporting themes in the pre-invasion period built a case for military involvement in Iraq. Therefore, the approach of the agenda-setting theory is appropriate and can be effectively deployed in this study.

"Framing theory" has been considered by some authors as crucial element and core principle of agenda-setting theory and this approach is also relevant for the purposes of this thesis (Berkowitz, 1992; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007; McCombs, Shaw and Weaver, 2014; Wanta, Golan and Lee, 2004; Scheufele, 2000). As discussed in this review, framing suggests that information is purposefully chosen and shaped within news stories to create a specific tone or implication. This thesis will consider framing theory as a clear subset of agenda-setting theory because the hypotheses established by agenda-setting theory, such as the media's power to construct reality or how the government and media's interests and relationship influence reporting, cannot exist without the implicit framing theory. Framing theory suggests that the information within these constructed news stories is purposefully and carefully chosen to present a specific message, which thus makes framing theory a necessary component to justify the assumptions of agenda-setting theory.

Agenda-setting theory has been utilised extensively by researchers in the field of conflict reporting specifically, and two main extensions of the original theory have emerged, defined as "policy agenda-setting" and "policy agenda-building" (Berkowitz, 1992; McCombs, Shaw and Weaver, 2014; Wanta, Golan and Lee, 2004; Scheufele and Tweksbury, 2007; Scheufele, 2000; Matsagani and Payne, 2005). For the purpose of relevance, this thesis will focus specifically on policy agenda-setting which places primary focus on the state-media relationship, which, it suggests, must be examined in order to understand the politics behind the construction of conflict reporting. Berkowitz (1992) in

particular defines the relationship between the media and policymakers as symbiotic, and suggests this relationship is controlled by the shared need for each other during the construction of conflict reporting. These authors point to several 'unofficial ground rules' such as reporters' need for access to conflict zones and official personnel to obtain credibility, political elites' need to control media narratives in order to pursue a military or political agenda, and the ways in which these unique interests concurrently impact on conflict reporting. Therefore, this framework is appropriate for the approach taken in this thesis, which can test if this relationship is indeed symbiotic by examining the U.S. government and U.S. media and how their independent interests and intertwined relationship influenced the apparent themes in the Iraq War conflict reporting. Figure 2.3 summarises agenda-setting theory and the key properties which this study's conceptual research will utilise.

Figure 2.3 Agenda-Setting Theory: Key Properties



2.6.2.2 Limitations of Model

Some interpretations of this theory make a pre-determined judgement or assumption that the government is inherently more influential than the media because, despite a symbiotic relationship, the journalists need the government more than political elites need the media (Berkowitz, 1992). This interpretation focuses on the media's need to be perceived as legitimate, credible, and remain competitive in order to stay in business, and

therefore heavily rely on policymakers in order to successfully function. This thesis will not start off with this assumption, and instead consider agenda-setting theory in order to test to what extent this relationship is symbiotic, and to determine specifically how the different interests and goals of the U.S. administration and U.S. media worked concurrently to impact conflict reporting, before then theorising about the balance of power relations within this dynamic in the case of the Iraq War.

2.6.3 Unique Conceptual Model and Theoretical Contribution

By considering the propaganda model and agenda-setting theory together to build the conceptual framework for this study, this thesis offers a unique lens and distinctive theoretical contribution for analysing U.S. conflict reporting. While both equally have value for understanding conflict reporting, it is necessary for this study to merge these frameworks in order to create a conceptual model that can provide the most suitable applicability for this thesis. Employing these two frameworks concurrently will provide a more well-rounded approach and conceptual model for this thesis to comprehensively analyse the politics of the Iraq War conflict reporting, through an examination of U.S. state-media relations. While components of the propaganda model will be essential for contextualising and analysing the seemingly propagandised news stories of the Iraq War, this model tends to be primarily media-centric, and therefore agenda-setting theory will help to weigh the dynamic of the state in combination with the media's impact upon conflict reporting. Thus the propaganda model will provide a useful framework to assess how the U.S. media's business initiatives promoted propaganda in news stories, in combination with agenda-setting theory, which will facilitate an analysis of the interests of the U.S. administration and the impact of these independent interests and the relationship between the U.S. administration and U.S. media on Iraq War conflict reporting.

As will be illustrated in Chapter 5, United States conflict reporting during the Iraq War tended to reflect one-sided news stories which favoured the agenda of the administration and which heavily relied on official sources for information, illustrating the existence of

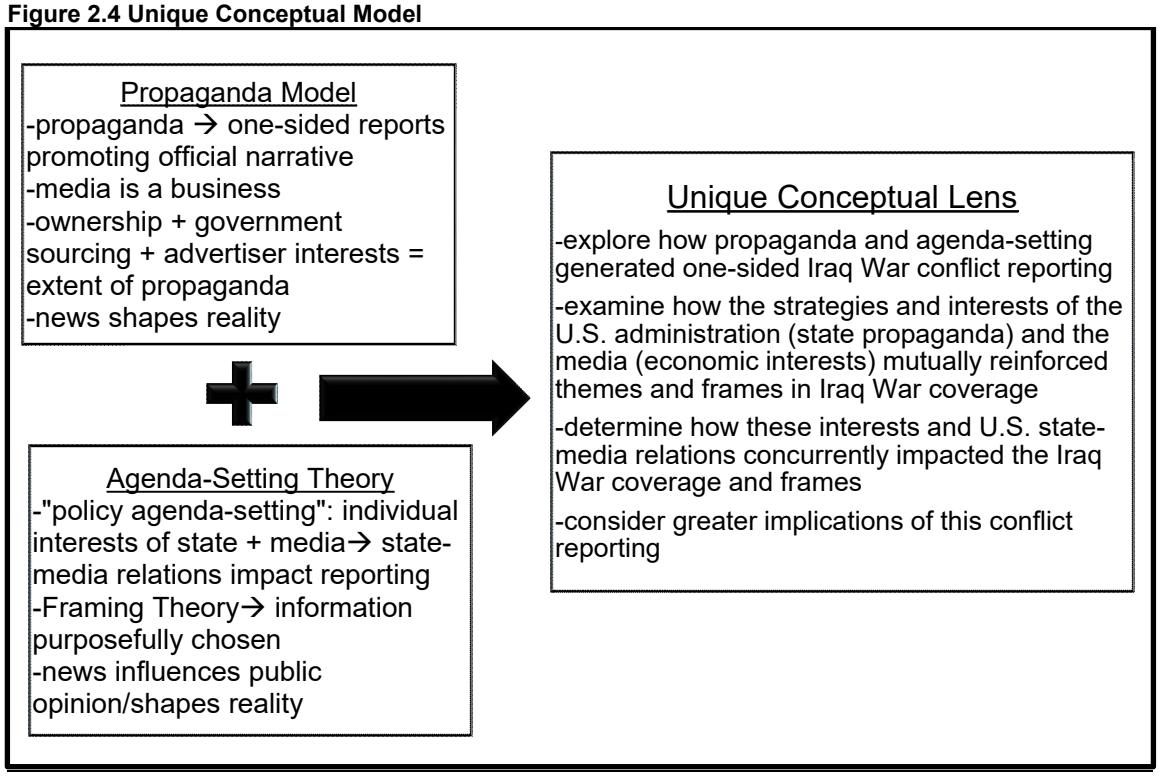
state propaganda as similarly theorised in the propaganda model. Further, this thesis will consider how the corporate media ownership in the United States encouraged the media to operate with a focus on business, such as prioritising obtaining high ratings and large audiences, a consideration which is also discussed in the propaganda model. Chapter 5 will also illustrate framing as a significant element in the Iraq War conflict reporting, referring to work of several researchers (Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Mermin, 2004; Masland et al., 2003; Kolmer and Semetko, 2009; Thussu and Freedman, 2003; Monahan, 2010; Hoskins, 2004; Altheide and Grimes, 2005; Dimitrova et al., 2005) who have presented statistics and data which breakdown the types and frequency of specific frames published in these news reports. Therefore, framing theory will be a necessary component of agenda-setting theory in analysing how U.S. state-media relations had an impact on the selection of these specific frames. This conceptual model will thus utilise properties of the propaganda model to establish to what extent propaganda was a factor in the Iraq War conflict reporting, and in what ways the narrative of news reports was influenced by the media's business considerations. Agenda-setting theory will bring in the interests and agenda of the administration as key components in the construction of conflict reporting, in order to consider how news frames helped the U.S. administration set its military and foreign policy, as well as also being a strategy of the U.S. media to pursue its various economic interests.

This review has suggested that the type of state-media relation most likely to pertain to the U.S. during the Iraq War was one in which there was significant state control and often limited media independence, despite being a system in which the media is formally independent from the state. Utilising this unique conceptual framework will help to unpack the implications of this state-media relationship, by first considering the various interests and strategies of the U.S. administration in Chapter 6, and then those of the U.S. media in Chapter 7. This approach will facilitate the analysis in Chapter 8 which will explore how U.S. state-media relations, shaped by these collective interests and strategies, impacted upon the Iraq War coverage overall. Additionally, Chapter 8 will demonstrate how public

opinion was shaped by the Iraq War conflict reporting and the U.S. state-media relations which impacted upon the coverage. Consistent with research on the Iraq War which places the U.S. administration and U.S. media as the principal influencers of conflict reporting, the propaganda model and agenda-setting theory consider the public to be shaped by the narratives of news stories, rather than the public playing an active role in the construction of conflict reporting.

Deployed concurrently, these frameworks provide an original lens to analyse how this unique relationship affected the coverage and assess how and why U.S. state-media relations contributed to generating the largely one-sided stories which promoted state propaganda. Thus, this thesis offers an original use of these perspectives and allows for a distinctive theoretical contribution, with the potential to create new research insights for analysing the Iraq War conflict reporting. This original conceptual model, summarised below in Figure 2.4, can allow this study to build upon existing research by not only examining the frames and narratives within Iraq War news stories, but also facilitating a deeper understanding of the politics of conflict reporting by critically analysing how and why U.S. state-media relations impacted upon this coverage.

Figure 2.4 Unique Conceptual Model



2.7 Identifying a Gap in Existing Research and Making a Contribution

The existing research on conflict reporting, particularly the literature on U.S. coverage of the Iraq War, establishes several key themes, however, the majority of these studies tend to primarily provide a narrative account of the practical and concrete elements of news stories when analysing the coverage. These tend to only focus on the events which transpired and the tangible facts about the news stories, rather than unpacking the intricate factors which contributed to how and why these reports were constructed with a particular angle or presented a specific perspective.

Specifically, the pre-invasion and Iraq War literature provide detailed data and statistics about the content of news stories during these periods, including the language and wording, types of sources, and the main narratives within reports. As Chapter 5 will illustrate, after presenting these figures and breakdown of the media stories during this era, the literature predominantly concludes that the conflict reporting was one-sided, favoured political elites' agendas, and resulted in a significant amount of inaccuracies (DiMaggio, 2010; Dimitrova et al., 2005; Berenger, 2004; Kull, 2004; Rutherford, 2004; Thussu and Freedman, 2003). However, these studies do not tend to ask why and how news reports were constructed in this manner, or critically analyse how U.S. state-media relations and the collective interests and strategies of the media and administration influenced the coverage. The data which breaks down the news reporting is detailed and vital for understanding this conflict reporting, and will be utilised throughout this thesis to build upon the key themes in the coverage which have been illuminated in order to contribute to the field by further analysing Iraq War conflict reporting. However, the existing literature does present a gap in the research because it does not examine in depth the complex dynamics and factors which affected these news stories and the politics behind conflict reporting.

This study seeks to account for, and then to address, this gap, by building upon the narratives and themes in the Iraq War conflict reporting which the literature has already established, but then going on to closely assess the U.S. state-media relations and subsequent impact on this coverage. This study will provide a unique and distinct perspective by first signposting the Vietnam War and the Gulf War as key points in the U.S. state-media relationship and its impact on conflict reporting, and then by defining and categorising the key themes and features of the Iraq War coverage. This thesis will then provide an original contribution which critically examines why and how conflict reporting was affected by the diverse interests and strategies of both the U.S. administration and U.S. media, and consider how these strategies, being employed concurrently, collectively influenced the Iraq War conflict reporting. By doing so, this study will determine that unequal power relations between the U.S. state and U.S. media were apparent, as evidenced by the coverage which widely supported the U.S. administration's agenda and initiatives, as well as theorise about how and why the specific interests and strategies explored in this thesis encouraged and contributed to generating this imbalance. By addressing this research gap, this thesis aims to add new perspectives and understanding to the politics of conflict reporting and the impact of U.S. state-media relations on the Iraq War coverage.

This thesis will also utilise its unique conceptual model which combines the propaganda model and agenda-setting theory to provide a theoretical contribution and conceptualise the politics of conflict reporting by considering the data and results in a wider theoretical context. The numerical evidence and statistics from existing studies break down the narratives and language of news stories, and provide clear support for the existence of the propaganda and one-sided narratives which support and advance the U.S. administration's agenda. For example, several studies will specifically be utilised to provide evidence which supports the contention that propaganda, one-sided stories, and repetitive language helped to perpetuate widespread misperceptions in the Iraq War coverage which validated the administration's agenda for military action (Spencer, 2005;

Kull, Ramsay and Lewis, 2003; Monahan, 2010; Berenger, 2004; DiMaggio, 2010; Rutherford, 2004; Hoskins, 2004; Gershkoff and Kushner, 2005; Snow and Taylor, 2006). This thesis will then build upon these statistics by utilising the conceptual model to undertake a critical examination which explores why propaganda appeared to be a key feature in Iraq War conflict reporting, how the interests of the state and media concurrently shaped conflict reporting, and to what extent media framing was motivated by agenda setting. Thus, the unique conceptual framework for this study will support a theoretical contribution which allows this thesis to analyse further the evidence provided by the existing research and contribute empirical insights into the politics of conflict reporting and the dynamic impact of U.S. state-media relations.

Conclusion

This literature review has highlighted the existing research's definitions, critiques, and analyses of conflict reporting and the various factors which can have an impact upon it. First, the review considered the extent to which researchers have been able to define conflict reporting by highlighting key characterisations. Then the significance of conflict reporting was outlined through a discussion of the debates which critique conflict reporting. The factors which influence conflict reporting, including technology and the use of images, were examined and the different debates about the impacts of these factors were discussed. Then the potential state and media strategies to influence conflict reporting were analysed. The spectrum of state-media relations was illustrated, and the impact of media ownership as well as the implications of these varying degrees of state-media relations, were considered. The original conceptual framework which combines the propaganda model and agenda-setting theory was outlined. Finally, the gap in the research and the contribution of this thesis was highlighted.

This review aims to lay the groundwork about conflict reporting, the factors which can influence it, and the different state and media strategies which can directly impact conflict reporting. In combination, the strategies of the state and media shape how they

may interact, and the various state-media relations can impact conflict reporting in very different ways. The literature has described how there are many elements involved when attempting to categorise this state-media relationship, including state impact through official and unofficial regulations, media influence through framing, and media ownership, in addition to several other variables such as the impact of technology and the type of media source. Although there can be numerous combinations of these factors and variables analysed throughout this review, the existing literature collectively theorises that the state-media relationship in combination with the other specific varying factors has a powerful influence on conflict reporting. There is a trend within the literature which overall suggests that a higher degree of control by the state catalyses a less autonomous and independent media, which as a consequence produces conflict reporting which provides a misleading, inaccurate, or incomplete account of a conflict. This thesis will examine this assertion and add to existing research by offering new insights in this field, by analysing the politics of conflict reporting and the ways in which U.S. state-media relations specifically had an impact on Iraq War conflict reporting.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will provide the details of the methodology employed for this thesis, explain how and why it was selected, and highlight why it is distinctly appropriate for this study. The aim of the chapter is to demonstrate the suitability of choice of methodology for this thesis in particular by highlighting the distinctiveness of the approach of this specific methodology for the case study. A critical account of the significance and purpose of this methodical approach will be outlined by explaining the selection of the qualitative case study approach and offering a justification for this choice, as well as examining some of the challenges of utilising a case study. This chapter will then highlight the use and application of secondary research. The process for primary research and data collection, including interview methods, participant selection, data analysis, and potential biases, will then be described.

3.1 Methodological Approach

This thesis is a qualitative study which adopts a case study approach to explore the politics of conflict reporting through the analysis of the interactive relationship between the U.S. administration and U.S. media during the Iraq War, and how these U.S. state-media relations had an impact on conflict reporting. ‘Conflict reporting’ is defined for this thesis to include the reporting which took place from the zone of conflict in Iraq as well as the coverage which was produced domestically in the United States. This thesis has specifically chosen to utilise a case study, the Iraq War, within a case study of the United States, for several reasons. As demonstrated throughout the Literature Review, conflict reporting can vary dramatically depending on several key factors, including the nation, the type of conflict, the type of political and media system, time period, and available technology. Therefore, in order to provide an in-depth and thorough critical analysis of conflict reporting, it would be inappropriate to attempt to concurrently assess multiple

nations or conflicts, because of the array of variables which can affect conflict reporting, and which could create inconsistencies in the research material and analysis. Therefore a case study approach, with a narrow focus on the U.S. conflict reporting during the Iraq War, has been selected because it provides the opportunity to research a specific event in order to determine themes, theories, and observations which may then apply to the wider topic area and expand the understanding of the field (della Porta and Keating, 2008; Gray, 2014; Yin, 2009).

There is an inherent challenge which must be considered when adopting a case study approach for qualitative research: the difficulty of drawing conclusions and yielding broadly applicable results from one specific case. This is the primary issue with a case study approach because of the focus on specific circumstances, and often the study cannot be replicated identically for other cases (Yin, 2009; Gray, 2014; della Porta and Keating, 2008; Gummerson, 2000). While this is a potential problematic consequence of the case study approach, it can be addressed if the specific nature of the research study is fully explored and understood. As della Porta and Keating (2008, p.206) describe, “macro-units (such as countries) are considered as unique and complex social configurations...In qualitative, historical comparison based on a case strategy, explanations are genetic (i.e. based upon the reconstruction of the origins of a certain event), and generalizations are historically concrete...[These case studies] enable limited generalization about historical divergence, pointing to different patterns of process and structure in history”. Historical case studies cannot, nor do they attempt to, create hypotheses, theories, or generalisations in the broadest sense. However, this research approach can produce viable considerations and conclusions about trends within a specific domain, which for this thesis is the United States (Skocpol and Somers, 1980; Goldthorpe, 2000; Ragin and Zaret, 1983; George and McKeown, 1985).

This thesis will therefore specifically adopt a hypothesis-generating and refining case study which allows for a strategic investigation of one case and discerns trends and insights into broader phenomena (della Porta and Keating, 2008). This thesis does not

aim to provide global or universal generalisations or conclusions about conflict reporting; however, this thesis will utilise one distinct case, the 2003 Iraq War, in order to detect trends and analyse themes about how conflict reporting is constructed specifically in the United States, as a result of the unique relationship between the U.S. government and U.S media. By addressing the historical context of the Vietnam War and Gulf War reporting, in conjunction with the in-depth analysis of Iraq War coverage, this thesis will seek to offer insight into the politics of conflict reporting by providing a careful examination of trends in contemporary U.S. conflict reporting and unpacking how and why U.S. state-media relations influences conflict reporting.

This thesis has also adopted a theoretical perspective of critical inquiry. Critical inquiry is an appropriate choice for this study because this theoretical perspective utilises an investigatory approach to researching social structures (Yin, 2009; Gray, 2014; della Porta and Keating, 2008). This thesis adopts this perspective because this study engages in a critical analysis of how and why U.S. conflict reporting during the Iraq War is influenced by the relationship between the government and media. Similarly, the goal of critical inquiry is to build new ways of understanding and interpreting a system in society, which parallels the primary goal of this study's research to provide new insight and perspectives into the production of U.S. conflict reporting. Specifically, critical inquiry focuses its study of society on power relations and functions under the assumption that "what are presented as 'facts' cannot be disentangled from ideology and the self-interest of dominant groups" (Gray, 2014, p.27). This thesis will therefore adopt this specific focus as the case study critically examines the strategies of the U.S. government and U.S. media during the process of conflict reporting in order to consider both how and why this relationship influences conflict reporting, as well as providing insight into the power relations between the state and media.

While some research notes a third influence on conflict reporting, the impact of public opinion, this thesis will take the view that it is most appropriate to primarily consider the U.S. administration and U.S. media as the principal influencers of conflict reporting for the

Iraq War. For example, Fiske (1986) challenges the assumption that the public is merely passive in the construction of news, and points to conflicts where the public was able to set the political agenda by mobilising a collective voice and consciousness. Thus, he argues that the public is an active participant in agenda setting, rather than being driven by state-media relations and their independent interests. However, Fiske's (1986) theory appears to more accurately describe specific humanitarian issues which create a public outcry and place pressure on a government to engage military aid or intervention. Therefore Fiske's (1986) assertions are not necessarily applicable for the focus of this thesis, which will consider a military intervention not originally grounded in, or presented as, a humanitarian crisis and which was not initially launched as a response to public outcry. Throughout the subsequent chapters, this thesis will establish and argue instead that it was the themes in the conflict reporting content, such as the perpetuation of several inaccurate misperceptions, which built a case for war and ultimately generated public support for an invasion (Gershkoff and Kushner, 2005; Altheide and Grimes, 2005; Kull, Ramsay and Lewis, 2003). Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, the public will not be considered as a primary contributing factor in the production of conflict reporting, because, in the case of the Iraq War, it will be argued, the public consciousness was shaped by news stories rather than the public influencing the political or military agenda. This point will be highlighted in Chapter 8.

3.2 Secondary Research

To support the primary research, the thesis will draw on secondary research as supplementary evidence for the examination of U.S. state-media relations and the impact on the production of conflict reporting. The secondary data will highlight existing research which establishes the themes and content within Iraq War coverage. This will provide a platform for understanding the narratives of Iraq War conflict reporting on which the primary data can build and facilitate an exploration of how and why this coverage was produced. The secondary research consists of a collection of key studies which provide

specific data and statistics about the Iraq War conflict reporting, such as the content of news stories during this period and the precise word choices or narratives. Specific quantitative data within the secondary research, for example numerical statistics on the number of news stories which included misperceptions about weapons of mass destruction or the number of stories which only utilised official sources, will be referenced, and this data will be analysed in order to discern trends in the conflict reporting.

The secondary research will also be utilised to develop a context chapter, which will provide a historical analysis of the Vietnam War and Gulf War conflict reporting, as the goal of this chapter is different from the primary analysis of the Iraq War. The Vietnam War and Gulf War have been chosen because, as Chapter 4 will demonstrate, they represent two key points in the development and progression of the relationship between the U.S. media and U.S. government. The Vietnam War has been chosen to begin this analysis because it was the first time news reports from a conflict were televised, thus signifying a new age and era for conflict reporting. This thesis will demonstrate and assess the significant impacts of televised coverage during the Vietnam War and Gulf War, which will also be relevant for the Iraq War case study. This context chapter will highlight the strategies of both the U.S. administration and U.S. media which emerged during the Vietnam War and Gulf War, how their interaction and independent interests impacted upon conflict reporting, and the main factors which influenced the production of conflict reporting, thus providing the historical groundwork on which the in-depth analysis of the Iraq War will build. Therefore, secondary research will be appropriate and effective for the examination of these contextual conflicts' conflict reporting and the development of U.S. state-media relations.

3.3 Primary Research and Data Collection Method

The intricacy of the relationship between the U.S. government and the U.S. media will be illuminated and analysed through interviews, which will provide insider perspectives, first-hand accounts, and insights from those individuals who work within

media agencies and the U.S. government. These interviews will add to and augment the existing academic literature, and strengthen the insights into this relationship. Primary research in the form of official government documents and official statements and quotes made by the U.S. administration will also be utilised to supplement these interviews. These invaluable perspectives and accounts will thus contribute to a deeper understanding and empirical analysis of the Iraq War conflict reporting, and will also facilitate a critical examination of the strategies that the U.S. government and U.S. media used to pursue their own interests, as well as the challenges they faced, thus shedding further light on the dynamics and politics of U.S. conflict reporting.

3.3.1 Methods

Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with key representatives in the U.S. government and the U.S. media. Interviews have been selected for primary data collection because they provide an opportunity to hear personal accounts and experiences from media and government personnel, in order to understand how conflict news stories are constructed. For this reason, interviews are more suitable for this study rather than a survey or questionnaire, in order to have the opportunity for in-depth conversations with participants about their conflict reporting experiences and perspectives.

Semi-structured interviews provide an opportunity to delve into the viewpoints and opinions of the participant, allow for a natural and productive form of questioning, and permit the interviewer and interviewee the opportunity to expand upon views or explore unexpected conversational pathways (Gray, 2014). The objective of these interviews was to gain insight into the specific experiences of these representatives, and semi-structured interviews create the opportunity for lines of questioning to be individualised and consider the particular role of the participant. These in-depth, semi-structured interviews are evalulatory in nature, therefore allowing the interviewees to “talk about their experiences, perceptions and values in their own way” based on their personal knowledge (Matthews

and Ross, 2010, p.224). The interviews include core questions for every interviewee, to allow for a comparative analysis of their contrasting views on the politics of conflict reporting. These key questions include themes such as the interviewee's interaction with the media or administration in the process of conflict reporting, and the factors which influence the questions asked by media personnel or the answers given by government officials. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allows the research to cover similar themes in each interview, in addition to allowing for more specific questions relevant to each interviewee's expertise. The interviews thus provide in-depth insights into the relationship between the U.S. government and U.S. media which otherwise may not be fully understood. These interviews will be also supplemented with a critical analysis of official statements made by the U.S. administration and a U.S. DOD document which outlines the specific federal guidelines and regulations for embedded U.S. media. This examination will provide a more well-rounded and comprehensive assessment of the U.S. administration's strategies and influence upon conflict reporting in particular.

Collectively, this primary research will help to answer the research questions for this thesis, which seek to discover how the relationship between the U.S. administration and the U.S. media impacted upon the production of Iraq War conflict reporting. The primary research will aim to address the first research sub-question by examining the specific strategies that were utilised by the U.S. administration, which sought to influence the information and narrative of news stories, and to explore to what extent the U.S. administration directly shaped conflict reporting. It will also seek to answer the second sub-research question, by illuminating the strategies utilised by the U.S. media to influence conflict reporting and challenge the attempts of the U.S. government to restrict the media, and to what extent U.S. journalists and media outlets were able to maintain autonomy and report openly about the conflict. These perspectives will help to answer the final research sub-question, how U.S. state-media relations had an impact on conflict reporting, by supporting an analysis of how these independent interests and strategies

concurrently shaped the dynamic of the state-media relations, and help to build the key findings of this study.

3.3.2 Participant Selection and Sampling

The participants of the interviews were chosen through stratified purposive sampling. As Gray (2014, p.217) describes, purposive sampling is effective for participant selection which focuses on “information-rich cases. Purposive samples are used when particular people, events or settings are chosen because they are known to provide important information that could not be gained from other sampling designs”. A purposive sampling strategy is therefore appropriate for this study because it supports a selection of representatives from the U.S. media and U.S. government population who specifically had experience in conflict reporting, primarily during the Iraq War, as well as those who had involvement in conflict reporting during previous conflicts, to allow for a comparison of these diverse experiences (Maxwell, 2009; Matthews and Ross, 2010; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Gray, 2014).

This thesis adopts a stratified sample strategy in order to ensure a wide range of different viewpoints and experiences from professionals and experts in the field (Gray, 2014; Maxwell, 2009; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). A homogenous sample would be problematic because the interviews would then only present perspectives from individuals with similar political affiliations or experiences during conflicts, and therefore might provide a limited or inaccurate assessment from only a narrow sample of accounts (Gray, 2014; Maxwell, 2009; Matthews and Ross, 2010). In order to support an analysis of state-media relations, a stratified sample can consider the various types of media and different political affiliations and perspectives which exist in the U.S. and which contribute to the intricate and dynamic interactions between the U.S. administration and U.S. media. Therefore, a stratified sample is an appropriate choice for this thesis, providing insights from a wide range of relevant political and media personnel, in order to better represent the broad spectrum of personnel in these domains (Gray, 2014).

The objective of the stratified selection was thus to select a wide range of participants in order to obtain a variety of perspectives and achieve a thorough account of the diverse U.S. media landscape. Political and media representatives from outlets aligned with different political affiliations were selected in order to ensure an accurate representation of the range of media outlets in the U.S., as well as potentially compare and contrast the different experiences of these participants depending upon the specific political association. Interviews have also been conducted with both print and broadcast reporters in order to assess the broad spectrum of media involved in the production of conflict reporting and the relationships with the state. Journalists who report from conflict zones, foreign correspondents, and those who report domestically will provide a well-rounded perspective of the different experiences acquired, and the types of interaction with political elites, based upon where a journalist was stationed. Representatives who report for American news outlets and based abroad (United Kingdom) as well as journalists who work for foreign news outlets (United Kingdom) and based in Washington will provide a comparative insight. Reporters associated with foreign media may have had a different experience reporting upon the Iraq War, and it will be important to assess to what extent their interaction with the U.S. political and military elites impacted on the news stories they produced. Undertaking interviews with journalists who have reported on several different conflicts as well as those who are newer to political reporting will help to assess if veteran and new reporters had different responses to the official and implicit regulations and pressures from the U.S administration, or deployed different strategies for maintaining reporting autonomy in the production of news reports. Interviewing a political analyst who works for an array of media outlets will offer a distinctive perspective, as analysts are not usually associated with one outlet or political affiliation and can therefore comment on different experiences with a variety of media outlets, including the relationship and interaction with the U.S. administration.

Because the research objectives and questions for this thesis seek to provide insight into U.S. state-media relations, it would thus be inappropriate to only consider one

type of media which would limit the analysis and capacity for this study to understand the intricacies of how the U.S. media interacts with the state and influences conflict reporting. Therefore, this thesis deliberately considers the various media perspectives together, including print, television, and online media, as well as embedded and domestic reporters, and will utilise these different facets of the U.S. media to analyse as a whole the themes which emerged from the U.S. conflict reporting on the Iraq War. As will be evidenced in the themes from the literature and interviews, the experiences of journalists across the different types of media, as it pertains to the U.S. state-media relationship, were similar, and Chapter 5 will reveal how the themes in Iraq War conflict reporting content were also similar throughout the various types of media in the U.S. When appropriate, this thesis will point to the specific type of media or reporting when referencing a specific study from the existing research, or in order to provide clarity. For example, the DOD document was written for embedded journalists in Iraq, and thus this thesis will consider its impacts specifically on embedded reporters and the subsequent conflict reporting. However, this thesis will also illustrate how the information and reports from embedded journalists directly impacted the domestic reporting, and thus reveal how the themes and experiences across the different types of media were closely linked, comparable, and ultimately yielded similar themes and narratives throughout the coverage. Therefore, when theorising about the U.S. state-media relations, it is appropriate for this thesis to consider the themes and experiences of the various types of journalism in the round, in order to provide a well-rounded and thorough analysis of the U.S. media's coverage of the Iraq War conflict reporting on the whole.

The intention for this study was also to interview politicians from different political parties and politicians who held office during many different conflicts as well as newly elected representatives in order to obtain a broad array of insights and analyse how the U.S. administration's relationship with the media may differ depending on these different factors. However, it is noteworthy that politicians, both past and present and of all political affiliations, were largely unwilling to be interviewed, and thus interviews with politicians for

this study are more limited than originally intended. However, this thesis will utilise a U.S. DOD document outlining the specific federal guidelines and regulations for U.S. embedded media during the Iraq War, as well as official statements and quotes made by the U.S. administration, in order to supplement the politician interview and to gain insights into the U.S. administration's perspective, strategies, and impact upon conflict reporting. Some of the interviews with the media representatives also provide insights into the specific ways the media were restricted through government regulations and strategies, and will therefore also be utilised as supplements in Chapter 6 which explores the U.S. administration's strategies to impact upon Iraq War conflict reporting. An interview with a leading academic in the field who has written some of the key academic texts on this topic will also add to this research, and provide insights and commentary on his own research and findings about Iraq War conflict reporting.

3.3.3 Data Analysis

The interviews were analysed using analytic induction and thematic analysis to identify common themes which emerged naturally from the interviews, rather than attempting to fit the findings from the interviews into fixed or predefined categories, hypotheses, or findings (Matthews and Ross, 2010; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Gray, 2014). By generating these themes through the interviews instead of relying on predetermined ones, the potential for bias in the analysis of interviews has been addressed and decreased. Any deviant cases, for example, journalists who expressed a reporting experience which significantly differed from others, will be noted and this study will consider why these outliers may exist. However, the largely common themes which became evident during the analysis have generated consistent and supported findings and conclusions about the nature of the interaction and relationship between the U.S. media and U.S. government and how this influenced Iraq War conflict reporting. This inductive approach to pattern recognition strategically identifies key themes which directly

relate to and answer the research question and will help to formulate coherent and compelling findings for this study (Gray, 2014).

3.3.4 Potential Interview Biases and Limitations

One primary concern when utilising interviews as the data collection method is the possibility of bias from both the interviewer and the participants (Gray, 2014; Oppenhein, 1992). Several steps were taken to minimise potential biases, however, this study acknowledges the possibility of interview biases despite efforts to alleviate this. The potential biases foreseen specifically for this study have been addressed as much as possible though the following considerations.

Before the interviews were conducted, all participants were given a copy of the Participant Information Sheet so that all interviewees had the same information about this study and the purpose of the interviews before the conversations took place. The core questions which were asked of every participant ensured that there was a baseline of consistent questioning which could be directly compared and on which subsequent questions could build. The wording for all questions was neutral and open-ended. Therefore, the connotation and tone of questions were not intended to sway a participant to be led to a certain perspective or answer, and naturally permitted for expansion upon each topic, which allowed for the interviewees to provide their own in-depth personal accounts and viewpoints. All participants were given as much time as they needed to answer each question, as well as being given the opportunity at the end of each interview to add any other information that they may have deemed relevant.

There was also the possibility that personal political beliefs or loyalty to respective media outlets or political parties influenced the participants' subjectivity and answers given in the interviews. Because the background and affiliations of each participant were known to the researcher, rather than being problematic, these potential biases were instead an integral feature, which were considered during the interview analysis. The political associations of each participant were taken into account as part of the data

analysis by comparing how questions were answered and the scope of information and viewpoints provided from those with different political affiliations. Therefore, the specific backgrounds, beliefs, and political associations of the participants were not only considered within the analysis of the data, but were also key comparative tools which were utilised to discern themes and trends between differing political viewpoints or affiliations.

There is also the potential for researcher bias when conducting interviews. As a researcher from California, I have my own political viewpoints and opinions about American politics and the Iraq War conflict reporting which have been shaped from my environment and experiences. However, I made a conscious effort to ask neutral questions which were open-ended and thus not suggest any particular opinion or perspective on the topic. In doing so, it was my goal to provide an open platform for the participants to share their perspectives and experiences without feeling swayed in a particular direction. Additionally, when analysing the data, I ensured to observe and draw out themes as they emerged and did so without seeking to emphasise only those experiences or perspectives which aligned with my own political opinions.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research methodology employed for this thesis. This chapter first described the qualitative case study approach of this study, and then explained how secondary research will be utilised. Finally, the primary research and data collection was outlined by describing the semi-structured interview method, participant selection and sampling, the method of data analysis, and potential interview biases.

The following chapter will begin the analysis of U.S. state-media relations and the politics of conflict reporting by providing historical context for this thesis and examining the conflict reporting during the Vietnam War and Gulf War. This analysis will highlight the emerging themes and factors involved in U.S. conflict reporting and state-media relations which will be relevant for later assessing the Iraq War coverage.

Chapter 4: Context and Background: U.S. State-Media Relations and the Vietnam War and Gulf War Conflict Reporting

Introduction

This chapter will provide a historical context for the Iraq War case study through an analysis of the Vietnam War and Gulf War and the development and evolution of U.S. state-media relations during these conflicts. As the first televised war, the Vietnam War signified a new media age and landscape which this chapter will argue had significant impacts upon conflict reporting. The emphasis on televised conflict reporting and extent of its impacts continued and expanded during the Gulf War, and will also be relevant for the next chapter to consider the effect of televised reporting specifically during the Iraq War. These two conflicts have also been chosen because, it will be argued, they represent two significant points which directly shaped the U.S. state-media relationship apparent in the Iraq War case study. This chapter can therefore consider the research questions of this thesis from a historical perspective by addressing how and why U.S. administration and U.S. media strategies to influence conflict reporting emerged, and consider to what extent these strategies and the shifting state-media relationship impacted upon the conflict reporting during these wars.

This chapter will first argue that the Vietnam War signalled an unprecedented period of change that sparked a significant shift in U.S. state-media relations. The first section will demonstrate how highly critical coverage of the war catalysed a new dynamic in the U.S. state-media relationship, where the independent interests of the U.S. administration and U.S. media would become key factors directly influencing conflict reporting. Specifically, in response to unfavourable coverage, the U.S. administration

became aware that strategies to regulate the media would be necessary to maintain control of the narrative, and successfully pursue its military agenda. This section will thus assert that the critical media coverage which emerged during the Vietnam War catalysed an unprecedented change in U.S. state-media relations and that this dynamic influenced conflict reporting by sparking a trajectory towards the specific strategies and interaction which will be explored in the Iraq War case study.

This chapter will then argue that the Gulf War is another key point of change in U.S. state-media relations by demonstrating how several of the U.S. administration and U.S. media strategies utilised to impact upon the Iraq War coverage appear to have emerged during this period. This section will illustrate a considerable shift in conflict reporting narratives, from critical Vietnam War reporting to largely unchallenging Gulf War coverage, arguably occurring as a result of changing state-media relations and the impact of the Vietnam War's critical coverage, which encouraged the U.S. administration to first begin enforcing clear formal regulations. However, this chapter will also highlight the apparent limitations of the U.S. administration's strategies to influence conflict reporting, and discuss how the U.S. media was able to maintain some independence from the state and retain its reporting autonomy. Publication of critical reports about the U.S. administration's military initiatives and agenda indicate a balance of power during this conflict which appears to be more even than that which existed during the Iraq War coverage. This section will therefore assert that the Gulf War represents a key transitional period in U.S. state-media relations, where notable themes and factors which influenced this coverage continued to be relevant and apparent during the Iraq War reporting.

4.1 The Vietnam War: A Catalyst for Changing U.S. State-Media Relations

This section will argue that the Vietnam War represents a defining moment in U.S. state-media relations relating to conflict reporting and will demonstrate how the usually loyal and dependent media, on which the U.S. administration was accustomed to rely,

would be short-lived during the Vietnam War. New media capabilities which emerged from developing technology created greater access for journalists, and the ability to communicate and share information more instantaneously. Before the Vietnam War this did not exist, and therefore the administration was unprepared for its effects, which ultimately resulted in significant critique of the U.S. administration's initiatives and a challenge to the official narrative. Thus this conflict was a hard lesson for the U.S. administration whose credibility, initiatives, policy, and public support were shaken by a new style of news and a more transparent and critical approach to conflict reporting (Hammond, 1998; Hallin, 1986; Hoskins, 2004; Spencer, 2005; Graber, 2003; Pach, 2001; Carruthers, 2000). The U.S. government realised that if the media could harness the power of TV footage and reports from the front lines to effectively communicate information, the administration must do something similar, in order to regain control of the narrative. The Vietnam War is therefore a crucial initial conflict to provide context to the development of the U.S. state-media relationship apparent during the Iraq War, and the role this dynamic played in the politics of conflict reporting.

4.1.1 Vietnam War Reporting Content and Themes

When the United States first entered the Vietnam War, the news reports largely misrepresented the United States' participation in the conflict and what was occurring on the front lines (Hallin, 1986; Hoskins, 2004; Graber, 2003). According to Graber (2003, pp.31-32), downplaying involvement in Vietnam was an intentional choice by the U.S. administration and "knowing that its policies in Vietnam would be highly controversial, the American government did not wish to alert the public to the extent of U.S. involvement or to the shortcomings of the South Vietnamese government, which it was supporting. Withholding of news so that it could not be published, exaggerating success to make policies more palatable, and some outright falsifications of potentially damaging data, became accepted policy tools". By only presenting certain facts and statistics to the media, the resulting frames and narratives of news stories during this early Vietnam

phase provided limited awareness of American involvement in Vietnam (Hallin, 1986; Hoskins, 2004; Graber, 2003). Al Gore, former American Vice President and a United States Army Private in the Vietnam War, adds in an interview for this study that when he saw the conflict for himself and spoke with the South Vietnam people, he learned many of them were deeply terrified of a communist takeover, contradicting the narrative built through American media coverage in order to support military action (Gore, 2016). Vice President Gore was thus able to witness for himself the significant control the U.S. administration had on the narrative during the first years of the Vietnam War.

During this time, U.S. journalists were largely reliant on official sources and did not have reason to question or be sceptical about the administration's assertions or narrative at this point (Hallin, 1986). Through interviews with government representatives and press conferences, U.S. reporters believed they were obtaining the most accurate and up to date information (Hallin, 1986). While reporters' intentions may have been to provide objective, accurate information to the public, their reliance on official sources resulted in news stories which simply reflected the administration's official statements and did not provide critical assessments. Even after the first American deployments, U.S. journalists were limited to reporting from Washington, and therefore without access to the conflict zone the media were completely dependent upon administrative claims and information (Hallin, 1986). Reporters were also not supplied with specific figures or statistics about this initial stage of involvement, and the subsequent stories created the illusion that the U.S. had only a limited engagement in Vietnam (Hallin, 1986; Phinney, 2011). While TV coverage was utilised during this stage, the news primarily consisted of pre-recorded reports which repeated simplistic accounts of official administrative reports, and therefore largely provided a refined perspective of American involvement in Vietnam (Hoskins, 2004). Therefore, it is apparent that in the early stages of the Vietnam War, the administration largely influenced the conflict reporting narrative (Hallin, 1986; Hoskins, 2004; Graber, 2003).

Beginning in 1968, Vietnam War coverage began taking a notable turn when it became clear to journalists that the U.S. had significant military involvement in Vietnam, contrary to the statements of the U.S. administration. The U.S. media began to discover that much of the information provided to them over the initial years of the Vietnam War was largely misleading or sometimes even completely false. Overall, reporters tended to feel that they had been manipulated into reporting a narrative and perspective which downplayed U.S. participation and intentions in Vietnam, and that the U.S. administration had contradicted itself too much for the media to continue to report unquestioningly the information from official sources (Hallin, 1986; Spencer, 2005; Graber, 2003). The Tet Offensive encapsulates this shift in how U.S. journalists reported on the Vietnam War and their growing doubts about official statements and the nature and success of the conflict (Spencer, 2005; Hallin, 1986; Culbert, 2005). Hallin (1986, p.49) asserts that “the contrasts that so often appeared between official optimism and reports from the field sowed the seeds of the ‘credibility gap’”. Until the Tet Offensive, the U.S. media was merely sceptical about the potential gap between the administrative claims and the realities of the conflict, but when Eddie Adams’ iconic ‘Saigon Execution’ photo surfaced, these suspicions were confirmed (Spencer, 2005; Culbert, 2005).

(Adams, 1968)

This photo destroyed the credibility of the U.S. administration's claims that the war was going well for the U.S., illuminated the conflict's atrocities and controversial practices, and was a defining moment in the conflict reporting domain which demonstrated the immense power that one image can have, as similarly highlighted in the Literature Review (Spencer, 2005). Consequently, in the years that followed, the U.S. media coverage of the Vietnam War can be described as a much more sceptical and candid portrayal of the conflict, comparable to the state-media relation the Literature Review identified in systems with extensive media independence and minimal state control. The narrative no longer romanticised the war as a valiant, successful effort by strong soldiers, but instead the U.S. media looked more critically at brutalities and apparent failures (Hallin, 1986; Hammond, 1998). Hammond (1998) provides various examples of this shift towards more critical reporting, including stories about South Vietnam military shortcomings, U.S. soldiers' drug use while on duty, the Johnson administration's questionable leadership, and uncertainty about the outcome of the war, as well as reports which exposed and criticised the numerous civilian deaths. One of the most shocking and devastating stories was aired by NBC and CBS in November 1969, showing footage of U.S. military leaders watching as their soldiers beat and stabbed several prisoners of war, directly contradicting the U.S. administration's rhetoric that the North Vietnamese army was violent and barbaric and had to be stopped (Hammond, 1998).

While it may have appeared that the U.S. media had turned its back on the U.S. administration, not all stories were negative representations of the administration or the war, but rather they depicted a more realistic portrayal of the conflict, with discussions of American victories as well as defeats and openly reporting the atrocities seen by journalists (Hallin, 1986). Therefore, despite increasingly critical analyses of the initiatives and success in Vietnam, it does not appear that the U.S. media was intentionally seeking to undermine the U.S. administration or only report negatively about the war, and instead the media arguably was acting as a true fourth estate (Spencer, 2005). The Vietnam War

reporting era has thus been categorised as a ‘coming of age’ or ‘golden age’ of conflict reporting, where American journalists increasingly prioritised truth and openness, and rejected the pre-existing norm in conflict reporting where the media echoed official sources’ narratives and information with little analysis or critique (Hallin, 1986; Hoskins, 2004). Vice President Gore (2016) similarly declared in an interview that this “coverage of war became one of the finest hours of American journalism with correspondents like Safer [and] Cronkite who tipped the balance of war and controlling narrative... The American press rallied to defend the truth”. In this sense, the coverage of this period closely aligns with the definition from the Literature Review which categorises conflict reporting as a space for open critique and discussion. This thesis will theorise how changes to state-media relations in response to this Vietnam coverage generated conflict reporting during the Iraq War which did not appear to continue this theme of open and critical reporting.

The rise of technology which brought several new capabilities into the conflict reporting landscape was a factor which emerged during this conflict, and which will be particularly relevant for this study’s assessment of the impact of technology on Iraq War coverage (Carruthers, 2000). The Vietnam War coverage demonstrated how the effect of images could be extremely powerful, especially when the brutalities of the war which the U.S. administration had attempted to mask were exposed (Pach, 2010; Phinney, 2011). These images not only revealed the reality that the U.S. was not succeeding in winning the conflict, but also that the U.S. administration had been deceitful (Phinney, 2011; Hoskins, 2004; Graber, 2003). Technological advances and televised news in particular thus provided an inside view of a conflict unlike any seen before (Hallin, 1986; Hammond, 1998). In this sense, the Vietnam War coverage was an unprecedented and catalytic period which influenced how wars would be covered in future conflicts, enabled by this new role of technology and the power of the image. The next section will draw from this illustration of the Vietnam War reporting content and themes by highlighting a significant change in the U.S. state-media relations, catalysed by these news reports.

4.1.2 The Emergence of U.S. Administration Strategies to Influence Conflict Reporting

When U.S. journalists changed their reporting strategies, they would unknowingly change the relationship and interaction between the U.S. government and U.S. media in decisive ways. When the administration began to receive a backlash for the misleading official narrative and seemingly disorganised and undeveloped initiatives and plans in Vietnam, the American leaders realised that in order to attempt to regain control of the narrative, the media could no longer be allowed to operate completely freely. Thus, the first deliberate strategies by the U.S. administration to influence conflict reporting emerged during the final years of the Vietnam War. These strategies included the creation of new government agencies, and official and unofficial regulations of the U.S. media such as those outlined in the Literature Review, including attempts to discredit the media outlets and personnel, restrict access to journalists, and control the scope of information.

For example, official groups and divisions of government agencies were created, such as Zorthian, a DOD division whose purpose was to oversee the journalists, set media policies, and establish a central press centre (Hammond, 1998). The Vietnam Information Group was also created, whose officials would write speeches and reports which were then leaked to reporters in the hope that these stories would be published in lieu of the coverage which contradicted the official narrative (Pach, 2001). The establishment and purpose of these agencies was to directly impact the conflict reporting by seeking to regain control of the information which would be presented in news stories, and thus shape a narrative which would support the U.S. administration's agenda and claims.

Additionally, formal regulations began to be implemented for media personnel, an official strategy of the U.S. administration which sought to restrict access to the conflict zone and limit the number of critical stories which emerged from embedded journalists' coverage (Hammond, 1998; Pach, 2001). These official regulations "embargoed anything that might embarrass the military services, help the enemy, or increase discussion of the

war" (Hammond, 1998, p.39). For example, the U.S. administration introduced a new protocol that monitored which media outlets could apply for embedded journalist credentials, in order to attempt to strategically influence conflict reporting by managing the type of reporters who would have access to the combat (Pach, 2001; Hammond, 1998). There was also a maximum cap enforced so that only fifteen journalists would be permitted on the military base at any one time, in an effort to limit the number of reports circulating (Hammond, 1998). Journalists were also required to generalise their statistics about incoming enemy rounds of fire and utilise broad language, "light, moderate, and heavy", when describing American casualties as a result of attack (Hammond, 1998, p.120). In addition, the administration introduced mandatory escorts for media personnel so journalists were no longer permitted to roam military bases or zones of combat freely, a strategy which sought to limit journalists' access to warfare (Hammond, 1998).

Unofficial strategies and implicit pressures directed at reporters, such as threats to jobs and reputations, also emerged during the Vietnam War. Journalists who reported information which contradicted the official narrative and assertions began to be removed from the conflict zone, which would typically be justified by the U.S. administration by claiming that the journalist gave away information in reports which created security threats (Pach, 2001; Hammond, 1998). This action, however, appeared to put security concerns in second place to the administration's fear of stories which contradicted the official narrative. Unofficial strategies also targeted U.S. journalists' reputations. By focusing on journalistic 'errors' and 'insufficient evidence', the U.S. administration attempted to build a case that reporters' information was inaccurate and grounded in illegitimate facts, implying that these journalists were jumping to incorrect conclusions or lazy with fact-checking (Hammond, 1998; Pach, 2010).

However, because these restrictions and limitations were a late response to critical coverage, the U.S. administration's strategies during the Vietnam War proved to be largely ineffective, and the damage to the administration's credibility had already been irreparably done (Ryan, 2012; Hammond, 1998). Many of the regulations put into place

were not strict enough, or took too long to structure and implement, and therefore had little practical influence on the news reports, which continued to be critical of the U.S. administration and the military action for the remainder of the war (Hammond, 1998). However, the emergence of these strategies is significant for the study of U.S. state-media relations and its impact on conflict reporting, because it signifies a change in this interaction, setting a precedent for later conflicts and a pointing to a shifting dynamic between the U.S. administration and U.S. media. Specifically, many of the official strategies, including the creation of agencies, regulations to conflict zone access, and limitations on information allowed in reports, which emerged during the Vietnam War, will continue to be highly relevant and apparent in the Iraq War case study. Similarly, unofficial strategies which sought to influence conflict reporting, such as targeting journalists' reputations or jobs, will also be identified as strategies of the U.S. administration, designed to influence the Iraq War coverage. In addition, the justification of 'security considerations' to defend these regulations, despite it being apparent that this was a strategy implemented in direct response to the critical coverage, is another theme which this thesis will demonstrate was apparent during the Iraq War.

Thus the Vietnam War provides a historical context for the research questions of this thesis by illustrating how the dynamics of the U.S. state-media relationship evident during the Iraq War were catalysed by the coverage of the Vietnam War, and demonstrating that some of the specific strategies utilised by the U.S. administration were first attempted during this conflict. Therefore, an examination of the Vietnam War coverage offers historical and background context to the research questions on which the subsequent chapters can build when considering how the Iraq War coverage was influenced by U.S. state-media relations and the various factors and interests which shaped it. While the Vietnam War catalysed a significant change in the dynamics of U.S. state-media relations, the Gulf War signals another considerable shift in U.S. conflict reporting and this developing state-media relationship. The next section will thus consider the Gulf War as

another crucial period of change, which will provide context for this thesis to unpack further the politics of conflict reporting.

4.2 The Gulf War: A Transitional Period for U.S. State-Media Relations

This section will argue the Gulf War was a transitional period in U.S. conflict reporting and the state-media relationship which impacted upon it. From experiences of the Vietnam War, the U.S. administration discovered that with changing technologies and media landscapes, it could no longer consistently depend on the press to produce stories which solely aligned with the official narrative or remained unchallenging and uncritical of the administration's agenda. While the Vietnam War was arguably a catalyst for changing U.S. state-media relations, this section will demonstrate that the Gulf War reveals a significant change in the dynamic between the U.S. administration and the U.S. media which directly impacted upon conflict reporting and set this relationship on the trajectory towards the type of state-media relationship that became apparent during the Iraq War. The Gulf War was transitional for U.S. state-media relations, it will be argued, because while the U.S. administration had learned from the Vietnam War that strategies to influence conflict reporting were necessary, the media and the administration were in new territory discovering how these regulations in combination with U.S. media strategies and interests, such as business considerations, would change the dynamic of this relationship and how this new interaction might be navigated. This section will thus illuminate how the Gulf War provides important and relevant historical context for the subsequent understanding and analysis of the politics of conflict reporting in the Iraq War case study.

4.2.1 Gulf War Reporting Content and Themes

The Gulf War conflict reporting, in large part, saw a return to the initial structures of the early Vietnam coverage, through reliance on official sources, reinforcement of the government's narrative, and an absence of widespread critical analysis of the U.S.

administration's policy and agenda. Many leading U.S. networks and media outlets during this period were also heavily reliant on political elites in Washington for information (Mowlana, Gerbner and Schiller, 1992; Carruthers, 2000; Mermin, 1999; Taylor, 2003). The interviews with these elites typically only included government and military leaders, which as discussed in the Literature Review, can generate conflict reporting which is misleading or incomplete, as a result of this limited and narrow scope of information and perspectives. Therefore, news reports often reinforced the official statements and viewpoints, and when non-government sources were utilised they were typically selected by the political and military personnel and continued to reiterate the official narrative, rhetoric, and agenda (Mowlana, Gerbner and Schiller, 1992; Robinson, 1999; Taylor, 2003). The sustained reliance on official sources developed as a key theme in Gulf War reporting and would continue to be prevalent during the Iraq War reporting. This reliance is thus historically relevant for the subsequent chapters of this thesis to build upon, when examining the politics of Iraq War conflict reporting and seeking to understand why this overreliance occurred and its impact on the coverage.

Specifically, Gulf War news stories tended to focus on a negative portrayal of Saddam Hussein, and concentrated on framing anti-war protesters as unsupportive of American troops and a threat to American security, both factors which supported the agenda and initiatives of the U.S. administration (Mermin, 1999; Mowlana, Gerbner and Schiller, 1992; Robinson, 1999). This narrative was further promoted through images and video clips which showed unruly or violent illustrations of Hussein, and images of chaotic anti-war protesters juxtaposed to representations of the patriotic, supportive American (Allen et al., 1994). The official sources also continued to reiterate that the U.S. was effectively 'winning' the war with minimal collateral damage, and the media echoed these claims (Mowlana, Gerbner and Schiller, 1992; Mermin, 1999). Despite the history of violence and human rights violations which both Iran and Kuwait inflicted during their respective conflicts with Iraq, the American media focused its reports on Iraqi atrocities, with little acknowledgement of the violence Iraq had endured from the nations the U.S.

was supporting (Carruthers, 2000). At the root of this coverage was the establishment of ‘us versus them’ and ‘good versus bad’ narratives which highlighted the American’s noble and heroic aid, juxtaposed against the evil and dangerous enemy. This Gulf War narrative is particularly relevant for the case study in this thesis, and the next chapter will illustrate how this theme was also evident in the Iraq War conflict reporting narrative and consider how U.S. state-media relations helped generate this frame.

The Gulf War conflict reporting also began a new trend of presenting a ‘clean’ representation of war, where the portrayal of the conflict was reduced to sanitised images and rhetoric which downplayed the horrors of war and implied that unnecessary destruction had been eliminated by technology (Petley, 2004; Culbert, 2005). These reports seldom showed images or discussed statistics of wounded or killed American soldiers, however they would provide visuals and data about Iraqis killed in battle, alluding to the overwhelming military success of the U.S. that had resulted in minimal loses. Carruthers (2000, p.26) observes how the U.S. media often published “faithful replication of military euphemism – ‘collateral damage’ for civilian casualties, ‘surgical strikes’ for bombing raids” and “Pentagon video footage, which projected a sanitised impression of bloodless ‘techno-war’ free from human casualties”. Ottosen (1992, p.141) adds that “TV screens were full of pictures of ‘smart bombs’ accurately hitting the military headquarters in Baghdad. These carefully selected pictures played an active part in creating the myth that this was a matter of a rapid and efficient war intended to strike military targets only. We hardly saw the result of smart bombs that did *not* hit their targets or the result of the massive carpet bombing carried out over Basra and other densely populated areas. And we shall probably never know how many Iraqi people lost their lives in the war”. This romanticisation of the Gulf War largely maintained an image of American success, and the ‘entertainment factor’ was also a key theme which promoted this focus on stimulating and captivating coverage. The sanitation of footage and focus on entertainment are also features evident in the Iraq War coverage, and this thesis will discuss the extent to which

these themes impacted on news stories and explore how U.S. state-media relations encouraged these features.

The Gulf War coverage thus in some ways reverted back to the unchallenging and uncritical nature apparent in the early stages of the Vietnam War. Several stories which directly challenged the official narrative did not emerge until after the war. For example, some stories which revealed proof of American war crimes, such as torturing of prisoners of war or civilian opposition in Iraq, were not published while the conflict was ongoing (Chomsky, 2008; Spencer, 2005). Similarly, coverage of anti-war movements and rallies were less prevalent than during the Vietnam War, and despite large protests occurring around the globe, the U.S. media often portrayed the western invasion as one that was supported both by the U.N. and by most of the world (Mermin, 1999; Schiller, 1992). During the Gulf War, the media also seldom offered an in-depth examination of the conflict as a whole, or questioned the information they received. Thus the U.S. administration's agenda and military strategy often went uncontested or analysed, which signalled a significant difference in comparison to the U.S. media's critical analysis and willingness to challenge events during the Vietnam War. The next chapter will argue that this was a key theme also present in the Iraq War reporting, which subsequent chapters will critically explore in order to further unpack the politics of conflict reporting and the U.S. state-media relations which contributed to generating such themes. Therefore, this type of reporting in some ways appears to align with the definition of conflict reporting described in the Literature Review, which categorises conflict reporting as a platform for state propaganda. This significant shift in the content of reports is apparent from the end of the Vietnam War to the Gulf War and the next section will explore why this shift in reporting occurred by examining changes and developments in U.S. state-media relations.

4.2.2 Exploring the Shift in the Content and Narrative of News Stories from the Vietnam War to the Gulf War

This section will provide a discussion about why the shift in the content of news reports occurred, from the open, critical media of the Vietnam War, to the often un-challenging news stories which reflected the U.S. administration's agenda and initiatives during the Gulf War. It will be argued that several factors, including the landscape of televised media and the developing state-media relationship, generated this shift and thus directly influenced conflict reporting, and the significance and impact of this conflict reporting will be explored. A similar analysis will be presented for the U.S. coverage of the Iraq War in the following chapters, and thus this section will provide historical context and considerations of the array of factors which can influence specifically U.S. conflict reporting. Several of the strategies employed by both the U.S. state and U.S. media will also continue to be particularly relevant in the Iraq War study and therefore this analysis will provide a historical analysis of their emergence and significance.

4.2.2.1 Factors which Influenced the Gulf War Conflict Reporting

4.2.2.1.1 Impact of Television and the 24-Hour News Cycle

The ground-breaking influence of television on conflict reporting was first seen during the Vietnam War, but the Gulf War is often considered the first 'television war', due to the new 24-hour cycle of news, a defining element of this conflict. CNN was the first 24-hour news channel and the "CNN effect" was a term coined to describe how powerful this reporting structure can be, and as illustrated in the Literature Review, is often closely linked to the 'entertainment factor' (Robinson, 1999; Cushion and Lewis, 2010).

Through the oversaturation and repetition of images and video clips, Allen et al. (1994, p.270) observe that 24-hour news created "a controlled, comprehensive narrative with little presentation of alternative views. The continuous, repetitious, redundant, and unbalanced nature of media coverage contributed to the framing and priming of the war, reinforcing the potential for a spiral of silence". This televised coverage tended to generate more misunderstanding than clarity as information was oversimplified through symbols, sound bites, and stereotypes, often resulting in stories which were inaccurate or

incomplete due to the focus on captivating audiences with exciting new updates. Many misperceptions or inaccuracies which supported the U.S. administration's agenda and initiatives were established and reinforced in part as a result of this television coverage and the powerful visuals, which emphasised entertainment over in-depth analysis (Tumber and Palmer, 2004). Morgan, Jhally and Lewis (1992) highlight the array of different misperceptions which emerged during the Gulf War coverage and reveal that there was a negative relationship between obtaining news through TV and accurate knowledge about the conflict. Thus, televised reports tended to generate inaccurate or incomplete information, and directly contributed to the widespread and continuous reiteration of misperceptions (Mowlana, Gerbner and Schiller, 1992; Robinson, 1999; Allen et al., 1994).

The 24-hour coverage of a conflict was unprecedented until the Gulf War, and was influential in perpetuating information unchallenged as well as claims by the U.S. administration and reports which supported its own initiatives. The Gulf War TV coverage would also directly influence how the Iraq War would be reported, and the subsequent chapters will highlight how several of the impacts of a 24-hour news cycle, including overexposure to images and focus on entertainment and limited analysis, would similarly impact on the conflict reporting and contribute to the themes of misperceptions and inaccuracies in this coverage.

4.2.2.1.2 Strategies of the U.S. Administration and U.S. Media and the Impact of Shifting and Developing U.S. State-Media Relations

Developing and changing U.S. state-media relations was also significant in contributing to a shift in reporting content, and arguably helped generate the often misleading and one-sided coverage. As Carruthers (2000, p.132) describes, at the onset of the Gulf War in 1990, "The Pentagon was still convinced that media, left to their own devices, were an obstacle to war-winning. President Bush himself...insisted that American troops would not be asked 'fight with one hand tied behind their back'- a warning shot to the press, and note of reassurance to the military. This time, media organisations would

be carefully managed to ensure they discharged ‘positive’ roles, such as the maintenance of morale and preparation of the public for potentially longer and costlier war than the Pentagon actually envisaged”. The ‘Vietnam Syndrome’ was a legitimate concern which the U.S. administration knew it must overcome in order to pursue its initiatives in the Gulf, all the while gaining and maintaining support from both Congress and the public, who were both initially weary of the ‘credibility gap’ established in Vietnam and the necessity and potential costliness of entering another conflict (Pach, 2010; Gardner, 2010). The Vietnam War therefore served as both a lesson and a warning for future administrations that in order to avoid the detrimental impact of unregulated conflict reporting on military initiatives and agenda, the U.S. media could no longer be allowed to report without restrictions or limitations (Carruthers, 2000; Hoskins, 2004). As a direct response to these issues which emerged from Vietnam, the U.S. administration pursued new, innovative strategies to influence conflict reporting and limit the influence of the media. The Gulf War was thus a transitional period for the U.S. state-media relationship, this chapter will argue, because the administration was discovering and testing the strategies which would be most effective to impact conflict reporting and regulate the media, changing its dynamic with the media which then had to respond to these strategies.

Official strategies were some of the most significant means the U.S. government sought to implement, in order to influence Gulf War conflict reporting. Specifically, during America’s initial invasion in the Gulf War, the media was completely denied access to the combat zone, and therefore there is zero footage which captures those first hours of the military attacks (Ottosen, 1992). As a result, the news stories about the American’s initial invasion of the Gulf are a collection of statements by the political and military leaders, thus providing no easy way to question or confirm these claims. The U.S. administration initially considered eliminating media from military operations during the Gulf War altogether, due to the challenges that new communication technology created (Martin, 2006). However, the U.S. government worried this would cause even greater negative

reactions, so instead, the innovation of media pools was born, a tool to regulate the U.S. media, which dominated the Gulf War conflict reporting landscape (Martin, 2006).

Media pools were designed to contain a small number of reporters and regulate the movements of embedded journalists by placing location restrictions into media contracts (Tumber and Palmer, 2004; Carruthers, 2000; Martin, 2006; Vincent, 1992). Military escorts were required of every journalist whenever entering the designated combat areas, which thus made it challenging for reporters to obtain new or independent information to supplement the updates from official sources (Norris Kern and Just, 2003; Martin, 2006; Vincent, 1992). When interviews were conducted with individuals other than official representatives, such as soldiers, an escort would be present who had the authority to divert questioning (Ottosen, 1992). Implementing the system of media pools was thus a U.S. administration strategy which had a direct impact upon the conflict reporting. One-sided and often misleading reports began to emerge because this media pool system limited the scope and type of information U.S. journalists could obtain, as well as reduced the capability for reporters to challenge or critique either the statements of officials or the success of the conflict. Chapter 6 will demonstrate how similar restrictions to access continued to be a significant U.S. government strategy which influenced Iraq War conflict reporting, and thus the Gulf War provides a historical context for this strategy and the changing dynamic of U.S. state-media relations.

Press conferences were another formal strategy utilised by the U.S. administration to seek to maintain control of the narrative and information which would be available for conflict reporting. While press conferences may have appeared to be an opportunity for U.S. media personnel to obtain the most up to date and exclusive information about the conflict, these were often semi-staged, and the press were prepped beforehand on what types of questions could and could not be asked (Vincent, 1992). Without the natural, open flow of questioning, these press conferences were thus a strategy to promote specific information and narratives which were dictated by the U.S. administration, in order to ensure the official agenda and initiatives were being supported and presented

(Vincent, 1992). Chapter 6 will also demonstrate how the use of press conferences was a U.S. administration strategy to limit the scope of information during the Iraq War, and consider how this strategy impacted the coverage.

Vice President Gore, a Tennessee Senator at the time of the Gulf War, remarked in an interview for this study that once the invasion began he was surprised to see how many new restrictions had been implemented on the press (Gore, 2016). In retrospect, Vice President Gore believes that these regulations no doubt resulted in a diminished role of the U.S. media's First Amendment rights, a significant theme which this thesis will find continued through the Iraq War conflict reporting. As a Senator, Vice President Gore recalls how the focus was on the calibre of military action itself, and because the war was brief and apparently successful, there was not much consideration or focus on how the tight regulation of U.S. media may have impacted on the conflict reporting. Looking back, Vice President Gore (2016) reflects that he "probably should have been more concerned about it at the time", but that deliberation about the severity of the official regulations "potentially got lost in general triumphalism that the U.S. military had come a long way since the dark days of Vietnam". Vice President Gore asserts that while these U.S. administration strategies did play a clear role in directly contributing to the one-sided and misleading conflict reporting, it was not until well after Gulf War that this insight became apparent.

In addition to official strategies, unofficial guidelines and implicit pressures on journalists were also utilised by the U.S. administration during the Gulf War in order to discourage the critical conflict reporting which emerged during the Vietnam War. David Hackworth, Newsweek Gulf War correspondent, recalled how he "'had more guns pointed at [him] by Americans...who were into controlling the press than in all [his] years of actual combat" (Sipschen, 1991, p.E2). These implicit guidelines and pressures were also observed by British reporter Robert Fisk, an embedded journalist for *The Independent*, who adds that "any journalist who remotely tried to question...the motives of that war was immediately accused of being a Saddam lover, a man who was obviously for terrorism,

who hated America" (Miller, 2004, p.215). By so doing, the U.S. administration sought to encourage the perpetuation of the official narrative in coverage, and these specific implicit pressures and unofficial regulations which emerged during the Gulf War will be historically relevant for the issues explored in Chapter 6, which will demonstrate how similar strategies were employed during the Iraq War.

Ultimately, media make decisions and choices about the specific information and narrative to publish, and this study will argue that framing was a U.S. media strategy largely driven by its economic interests. For example, the Literature Review demonstrated how the overreliance on official sources, apparent in the Gulf War and the Iraq War, can shape frames and be motivated by the media's desire to appear credible and also to try to avoid any potential repercussions to access, jobs, and reputation, if journalists are seen to be challenging the official narrative with dissenting views (Richardson, 2007; Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010; DiMaggio, 2010; 2017; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Laity, 2005; Mermin, 2004). The demand on journalists to comply with the new formal and implicit guidelines and restrictions during the Gulf War was unprecedented, and navigating this changing relationship was a learning process for both the U.S. administration and U.S. media, thus making the Gulf War arguably a transitional period for this state-media relationship and the impacts on conflict reporting. In response to the new regulations placed upon them, journalists often felt torn between compliance, in order to pursue these economic goals, and the desire to fulfil their role as the fourth estate (Miller, 2004; Mowlana, Gerbner and Schiller, 1992). A significant amount of the implicit pressure appears to have centred upon upholding a positive perspective about the U.S. involvement in the Gulf War and the U.S. administration's agenda, and thus the journalists had to weigh the potential consequences for challenging this narrative. Therefore, the business considerations of the reporters became a factor which impacted the U.S. media's strategies and had an influence on conflict reporting. Chapter 7 will argue these economic interests also largely drove the U.S. media's strategies for navigating regulations and framing during the Iraq War.

The Gulf War was arguably a transitional period in conflict reporting and U.S. state-media relations because both the U.S. media and U.S. government were in new, uncharted territory, each trying to navigate its changing role and capabilities to influence conflict reporting. This section has demonstrated several factors which contributed to this developing state-media relationship and directly influenced conflict reporting, many of which will continue to be relevant for the Iraq War case study. Therefore, this analysis provides historical context for the developing U.S. state-media relations for subsequent chapters to build upon, in order to unpack the intricacies of this relationship and the role of this dynamic in the politics of conflict reporting.

4.2.2.2 Considering the Wider Impacts and Significance of the Gulf War Conflict Reporting

The primary impacts of this developing state-media relationship and Gulf War conflict reporting were the influence on public opinion and military policy, as well as the somewhat unequal power relations, where it appears the state was beginning to have more capacity to directly influence the conflict reporting themes and narratives than previously. These are themes and impacts which this study will find were also relevant in the Iraq War case study, thus making the Gulf War historically relevant for exploring and understanding U.S. conflict reporting, and the role of state-media relations which appear to indicate an unequal balance of power.

Martin (2006) determines that use of media pools contributed to priming the public to support the war, as a consequence of the news frames and limited information, which helped to perpetuate the administration's narrative and support its agenda. The frames and narratives established about Saddam Hussein ignited fear in the American public and created the belief that Hussein was a threat not only in the Middle East but also to the safety of the United States (Carruthers, 2000; Foster, 1999). As a result of the 'us versus them' narrative, the administration was able to justify invasions, use of military force, and even civilian casualties. Because the narrative had established that the U.S. was on the

side of ‘right’, America’s use of force was represented as a just cause for the betterment and greater security of society, while the enemy’s violence was depicted as a dangerous threat (Chomsky, 2008). Vice President Gore (2016) further asserts that these specific narratives in the U.S. media which presented justifications for military involvement effectively garnered both public and congressional support by maintaining a positive, unchallenged image of the war.

Morgan, Lewis and Jhally (1992) also observe a positive correlation between watching television reports and support for the war. Two of the most significant statistics reveal that only 2% of the sample population could identify Kuwait’s insistence on lowering oil prices, which would severely impair Iraq’s economy, as a reason for Iraq’s invasion of that state, and only 13% knew that the U.S. had told Iraq that it would not intervene if Iraq invaded Kuwait. However, the majority of the sample pool did know that Hussein had used chemical weapons in Iran (Morgan, Lewis and Jhally, 1992). Therefore, the majority of the American public seemingly did not understand what ignited the conflict which they were now supporting, and were unaware of the Iraqi perspective and interests in Kuwait, but most had the impression that Hussein was threatening and dangerous. The U.S. administration had thus built a cohesive narrative establishing Hussein as a rogue leader who was using unjustified force, and therefore the Iraqi motives for invading Kuwait were essentially silenced in the U.S. media in order to maintain this public support for eliminating Hussein. Vincent (1992, p.199) declares that “knowingly or unknowingly, CNN all too often helped perpetuate the status quo point of view of the Gulf War, as did other news media”. Morgan, Lewis and Jhally (1992, p.220) add that “this amounted to a remarkable rewriting of history in the collective consciousness, the beneficiary of which was the Bush administration”. The U.S. administration’s strategies to influence the conflict reporting, especially in the realm of television coverage and the images, interviews, and rhetoric within the reports, thus appear to have generated great public support, accepting this information with little scepticism. It also appears that shaping the public opinion in turn allowed for the U.S. administration to pursue its military agenda. The impact on public

opinion is an issue which will continue to be relevant when analysing the Iraq War conflict reporting and will be specifically discussed in Chapter 8. The Gulf War thus provides historical context for the emergence of the type of state-media relationship apparent during the Iraq War and also forms the backdrop for considering the significance and reach of its impact.

In a similar way, the Gulf War analysis indicates how unequal power relations began to emerge between the U.S. administration and U.S. media, and the capacity of the U.S. administration to set its agenda through conflict reporting. This chapter has illustrated how the Gulf War narrative was often one-sided and supportive of the U.S. administration's agenda, even if this resulted in a misrepresentation of the conflict. Gulf War framing thus appeared to be an "amazing coordination of voluntaristic efforts by hundreds of media gatekeepers (editors, broadcasters, disc jockeys, sports announcers, talk-show hosts, etc) [who] succeeded in presenting the Gulf War [as]...heroic Western leadership of the Arab world joined with mouth-gaping demonstrations of advanced weaponry" (Schiller, 1992, p.23). Tom Wicker, a Gulf War journalist adds that "the real, and dangerous, point is that the Bush Administration and the military were so successful in controlling information about the war that they were able to tell the public just about what they wanted the public to know. Perhaps worse, press and public largely acquiesced in this disclosure of only selected information" (Wicker, 1991, p.A17). However, this chapter still categorises the Gulf War as a transitional point in U.S. conflict reporting and the impact of state-media relations, because despite the implementation the U.S. administration's strategies, there were still reports which did publish viewpoints which either challenged or contradicted the official narrative. Some stories emerged which revealed the poverty of refugees and the war-torn country, which created pressure for the administration to address these issues. However, critical stories appeared in relatively small numbers compared to the coverage which aligned with the official narrative, including 76% of stories during the initial two weeks of the invasion which were supportive of President Bush (Schiller, 1992).

Nonetheless, the appearance of critical coverage is still noteworthy, when considering how the power relations of the U.S. state-media relationship developed and changed, and the specific dynamic of this relationship during the Iraq War. During the Gulf War it appears that the U.S. media was able to maintain a degree of independence from the administration by publishing some stories which challenged or contested the official narrative, despite the growing amount of regulations placed upon them. The subsequent chapters will argue that the power relations appeared more unequal during the Iraq War, with less evident media independence and greater state control. This chapter therefore considers the Gulf War to point to a transitional phase in U.S. state-media relations, where the media and administration demonstrated an arguably more equal balance of power in the capacity to influence conflict reporting, which helps to provide historical context for the exploration of U.S. state-media relations and its impact during the Iraq War.

Conclusion

This chapter has developed a historical context for the Iraq War conflict reporting by analysing the Vietnam War and Gulf War coverage, and demonstrated how these wars represent significant points in U.S. state-media relations. This chapter began by highlighting the content of Vietnam War conflict reporting and the first apparent attempts of U.S. administration strategies to influence conflict reporting in response to critical coverage, though they proved to be largely unsuccessful and the critical stories continued. This next section then analysed how the Vietnam War directly impacted upon the Gulf War reporting by illustrating how the content of Gulf War stories tended to be more uncritical of the U.S. administration and supportive of its military agenda. This chapter then highlighted the various factors which may have contributed to this shift in reporting content. The significance and impact on public opinion and the development of somewhat unequal power relations between the U.S. administration and the U.S. media were then discussed.

This chapter has provided a historical context which signposted two key periods in the U.S. state-media relationship and the impact on conflict reporting. The chapter has also considered the research questions for this thesis from a historical point of view; it has explored how and why this relationship developed, and illuminated the initial emergence of key factors, such as televised and 24-hour news coverage, and strategies, including the U.S. administration's formal and implicit regulations and the U.S. media's framing, which influenced conflict reporting and which will continue to be relevant for the examination of Iraq War reporting. By doing so, this chapter has provided a historical context for U.S. conflict reporting in order to lay the groundwork for analysing how and why U.S. state-media relations influenced Iraq War conflict reporting. The next chapter will begin the assessment of the Iraq War conflict reporting by providing a background and context chapter which introduces this conflict.

Chapter 5: The Iraq War Conflict Reporting Context and Background

Introduction

This chapter will build upon the examination of the Vietnam War and Gulf War, by demonstrating a further shift apparent in the reporting content during the Iraq War. It will be argued that the Iraq War was unprecedented in the extent to which the conflict reporting was one-sided and uncritical of the U.S. administration's agenda and initiatives, by highlighting the main narratives and themes in this coverage. The subsequent chapters will then be able to address the research questions of this thesis by exploring the politics of conflict reporting and in what ways U.S. state-media relations impacted upon these Iraq War conflict reporting themes.

This chapter will first introduce the Iraq War by discussing its causes and purpose, revealing that both of these elements are still contested. It will be claimed that the critical study of conflict reporting can help to better understand the causes and purpose of the war. This chapter will then examine the principal narrative of the pre-invasion period and Iraq War conflict reporting, arguing that a largely one-sided perspective with uncritical support of the U.S. administration's agenda and initiatives was the overarching theme in this coverage. This chapter will then examine how several supporting themes and features, including the dramatisation of reports, the establishment of several inaccurate misperceptions, an 'us versus them' narrative, and the overreliance on official sources, helped to generate this one-sided coverage. Establishing these Iraq War conflict reporting themes will be essential for the following chapters, which will draw from this analysis in order to assess the extent to which the strategies of the U.S. administration and U.S. media interacted concurrently to shape these themes and features. The final section will highlight several structural factors and how they impacted Iraq War conflict reporting, including the 24-hour TV media landscape, the corporate ownership structure of the U.S.

media, the politicised nature of the U.S. media, and the decrease in investigatory journalism. This section will seek to demonstrate how these structural factors mutually reinforced each other and the subsequent chapters will reflect upon and consider the role they played in U.S. state-media relations and Iraq War reporting.

5.1 Reasons for the Iraq War

While the official invasion of Iraq, named 'Operation Iraqi Freedom', began on 20 March 2003, when the United States deployed military troops to Iraq and combat began, several researchers and politicians argue that to a large extent the war began several years before this initial military involvement. Much of the Iraq War literature (Gardner, 2010; Thussu and Freedman, 2003; Dover and Goodman, 2009; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Berenger, 2004; Schechter, 2003; DiMaggio, 2010; Altheide, 2006; Mermin, 2004; Gershkoff and Kushner, 2005; Gore, 2007) suggests that in many ways the Iraq War began with the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks. These researchers assert that September 11th created a platform for the U.S. administration to build a justification and case for going to war with Iraq, and therefore the eventual invasion would not have been possible without the administration previously shaping a rationale for the conflict in response to the attacks. This thesis supports this assertion, and the following section will demonstrate how the themes apparent in the reporting content played a significant role in shaping this rationale and building the justification for an invasion in the aftermath of September 11th. Specifically, this chapter will illustrate how news stories built upon the fear and insecurity which was felt by the American people after the attacks, and began to form an argument that would justify an eventual invasion of Iraq.

Therefore, although the war formally started in 2003, September 11th is an important factor to consider when examining the origins of the Iraq War and subsequent conflict reporting, as researchers widely suggest that this tragedy catalysed the ability for the U.S. administration to wage a war in Iraq (Gardner, 2010; Dover and Goodman, 2009; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Berenger, 2004; DiMaggio, 2010; Altheide, 2006; Mermin,

2004; Gershkoff and Kushner, 2005; Gore, 2007). This thesis will thus critically assess the news reports during the 'pre-invasion period', which emerged in response to the September 11th attacks, as a part of the Iraq War conflict reporting. The 'pre-invasion period' is defined as the seventeen months between the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks and the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, and the analysis of this U.S. media coverage will illuminate the extent to which reporting during this period supported a potential invasion and created a reporting standard which would continue into the Iraq War reporting itself.

The purpose of the Iraq War is still contested in both academia and politics. To a large extent it appears that the Iraq War was in direct response to the September 11th attacks and that these attacks catalysed a broader 'war on terror' in response to a projected fear of terrorism (Gardner, 2010; Thussu and Freedman, 2003; Dover and Goodman, 2009; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Berenger, 2004; DiMaggio, 2010; Gershkoff and Kushner, 2005; Gore, 2007). However, the underlying reason and purpose of specifically directing focus on Iraq as the initial and primary target of this larger 'war on terror' is still questioned. The U.S. administration sought to present the invasion as a 'liberation', as reflected in the title 'Operation Iraqi Freedom', arguing that Saddam Hussein was an imminent threat to the security of the U.S. and that in order to combat the terrorist threat, Hussein needed to be eliminated (Dimitrova et al., 2005; Dover and Goodman, 2009; Berenger, 2004; DiMaggio, 2010; Altheide, 2006; Mermin, 2004; Gardner, 2010; Gershkoff and Kushner, 2005; Gore, 2007). In addition to installing a regime change that would liberate the Iraqi people, the U.S. administration also emphasised that Iraq needed to be targeted because intelligence suggested that Iraq had developed weapons of mass destruction and that Hussein had direct links with al-Qaeda. The following section will more closely inspect these misperceptions, and highlight that although these claims were incorrect, the U.S. media focus on them created inaccurate perceptions which became key themes of the coverage. Subsequent chapters will seek to

explore how U.S. state-media relations contributed to reinforcing these misperceptions as part of the overall narrative, which became justifications for an invasion of Iraq.

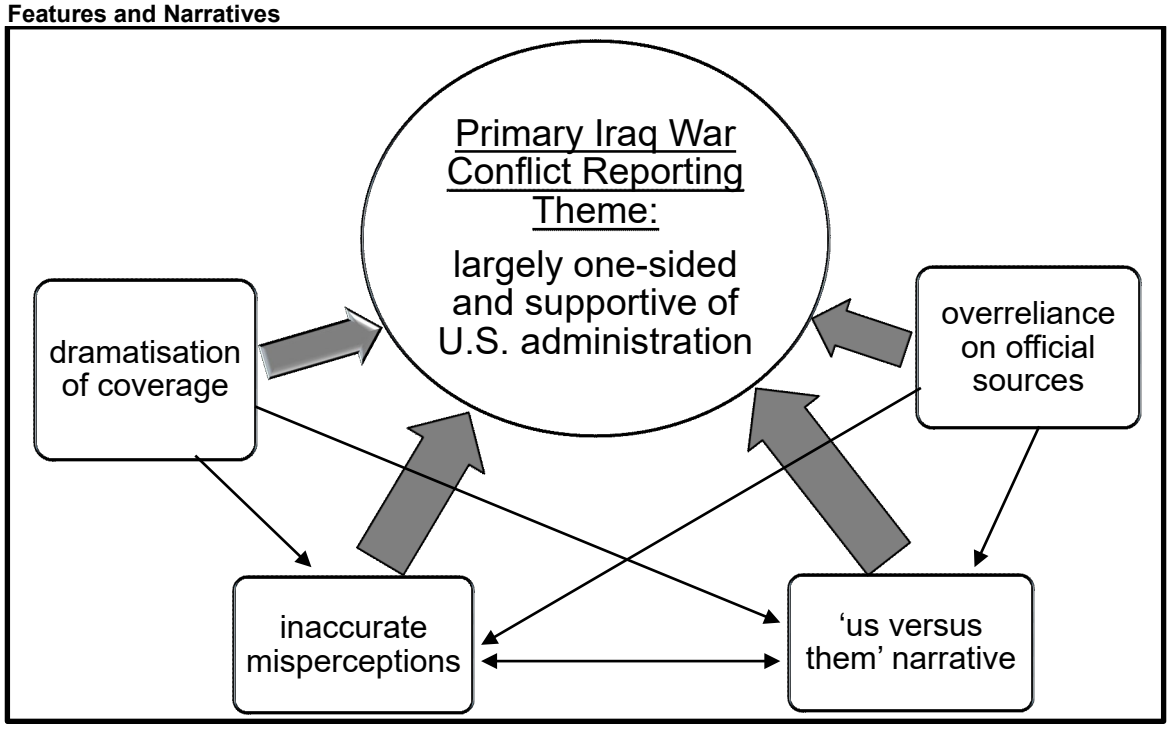
Thus, while the operation name may suggest that the purpose of the U.S. invasion of Iraq was to combat terrorism by liberating the Iraqi people and creating a more stable regime, there are several other potential underlying reasons for targeting Iraq as a part of the 'war on terror'. One purpose for the Iraq War has been suggested as President George W. Bush's opportunity to finally remove Hussein from power and complete this mission originally launched by his father, President George H.W. Bush (Gore, 2007; Gardner, 2010). In addition, it has been argued that the Bush administration was interested in gaining access to Iraqi oil sources and therefore invading and occupying Iraq was a means to control oil supplies (Dover and Goodman, 2009; Berenger, 2004; Gershkoff and Kushner, 2005; Gore, 2007). This purpose also closely relates to the theory that the Bush administration was hoping to situate the U.S. as a political power and authoritative force in the Middle East, and thus pursue its geo-political interests by obtaining control over oil sources (Gore, 2007).

While the underlying reasons for the Iraq War may still be debated, there is a wide consensus that the justification for an invasion was formed in response to the September 11th attacks within the broader 'war on terror' as a means of targeting and removing Hussein from power (Gardner, 2010; Thussu and Freedman, 2003; Dover and Goodman, 2009; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Berenger, 2004; Schechter, 2003; DiMaggio, 2010; Altheide, 2006; Mermin, 2004; Gershkoff and Kushner, 2005; Gore, 2007). The assessment of pre-invasion reporting in the next section and the subsequent chapters which highlight the strategies of the U.S. administration and U.S. media will thus be crucial to illuminate the potential underlying reasons and purposes of the war. In order to explore to what extent U.S. state-media relations shaped conflict reporting to justify the initial invasion and the continued military action in Iraq, the causes and purposes of the Iraq War are thus relevant to consider for this thesis and its examination of the politics of conflict reporting.

5.2 Assessing the Content of Iraq War News Stories

This section will explore the narratives and themes within the Iraq War conflict reporting, including during both the pre-invasion period and during the conflict. The principal theme apparent within the content of the conflict reporting will be first discussed, demonstrating the extent to which these reports were largely one-sided and seldom challenged or critiqued the U.S. administration's political agenda and military initiatives. The subsequent four sections will assess supporting features of these reports, and demonstrate how these promoted and reinforced each other, and collectively contributed to this principal narrative, summarised below in Figure 5.1. This section will thus illuminate a significant shift in the content of conflict reporting from the Vietnam War and the Gulf War, which to different degrees still presented dissenting views, to the Iraq War, which was arguably unprecedented in its uncritical reflection of the perspective and agenda of the U.S. administration. This section will therefore provide the context for the following chapters to assess the U.S. administration and U.S. media strategies and how this relationship shaped and influenced the key themes and features of the Iraq War conflict reporting content examined in this analysis.

Figure 5.1 Iraq War Conflict Reporting Themes and the Connections and Impacts between Key Features and Narratives



5.2.1 The Overarching Theme of the Pre-Invasion and Iraq War Conflict Reporting

The pre-invasion period reporting began with the coverage of the September 11th terrorist attacks and continued until the ultimate invasion of Iraq, and, in many ways, the reporting of this period laid the groundwork and created a platform that would support an eventual invasion. As a response to the September 11th attacks, these news reports tended to focus on promoting patriotism and a united American front to combat terrorism (Schechter, 2003; Altheide and Grimes, 2005; Altheide, 2006; Steuter and Wills, 2010; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Monahan, 2010). The data provided by Schechter (2003) reveals that across all different types of media outlets, 62% of reports were all or mostly pro-American, and controlling for televised reports indicates that 74% of TV stories were all or mostly pro-U.S., during the three months following the September 11th attacks. Comparatively during this same period, only 3% of overall reporting included stories that predominantly presented dissenting viewpoints (Schechter, 2003). Altheide and Grimes (2005) and Monahan (2010) add that the principal message of these pro-American news stories was to promote a patriotic and unified narrative that supported an invasion of Iraq as part of the broader 'war on terror' mega-narrative. This will be particularly relevant when assessing the implicit U.S. administration strategy to encourage journalists to uphold their patriotic duty, discussed in Chapter 6. Monahan (2010, p.144) argues that the "presence of hegemonic narratives…proved ideally suited to certain political goals (i.e., unifying the nation and creating a supportive context for sustained military action)". Thus, the research collectively suggests that the overarching theme of the pre-invasion conflict reporting was the construction of a platform that supported the U.S. administration's initiative for an invasion in Iraq.

These predominantly pro-American news reports also helped create the groundwork for an eventual invasion by either ignoring or negatively framing anti-war sentiments. Only 3% news reports during the three months following September 11th including dissenting views, which suggests that anti-war movements were largely

unrepresented in pre-invasion coverage (Schechter, 2003). However, despite minimal attention, anti-war movements were widespread across the nation during this period, with organised marches and protests ranging from 1,000 people to over 500,000 participants, who marched in 150 cities across the U.S. (Barber, 2017). One of the largest protests occurred on 15 February 2003, and included more than 300,000 people in New York alone (Barber, 2017). Bishop (2006) observes that when anti-war movements were covered, protests were often presented to be primarily isolated to college campuses which downplayed the prevalence and extensive reach of protests and marches across the nation. Bishop (2006) adds that news reports largely did not include in-depth analysis that highlighted the key issues and concerns of the protesters, but rather the arguments were reduced to vague summaries, chants, and signs. The prevailing narrative in news stories about these protesters was that they were limited and rare anomalies outside the widespread consensus that the war was a positive endeavour (Bishop, 2006). Therefore, the reporting during the pre-invasion period appears to have not only heavily supported the U.S. administration and its military initiatives in Iraq, but also predominantly silenced anti-war sentiments, by failing to cover the extensive protests or by framing them in a dismissive and negative manner.

The major theme throughout the news reports of the pre-invasion period thus appears to be the uncritical or unchallenging narrative which supported the U.S. administration's agenda and aims. Mermin (2004, p.69) declares that "because journalists could not see (or were unwilling to report) beyond the narrow debate being held in Washington, President Bush was able to stake out an extraordinary position- that a preemptive invasion of a nation that had nothing to do with the September 11 attacks would somehow advance the U.S. cause in the global 'war on terrorism". Several other researchers (Dimitrova et al., 2005; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Dover and Goodman, 2009; Williams, 2003; Brinson and Stohl, 2009) similarly assert that the U.S. news coverage during the pre-invasion period was exceedingly uncritical, unchallenging, and reported the statements and claims of the U.S. administration as fact, without

investigation or challenge. Williams (2003, p.177) observes that in the pre-invasion period, the U.S. media “quickly abandoned all pretence of objectivity and became the uncritical mouthpiece of the US state”. This overarching theme will be drawn upon in the following chapters, which will be used to analyse the strategies of both the U.S. administration and U.S. media, in order to illuminate how these strategies may have influenced pre-invasion period conflict reporting to be largely uncritical of the U.S. administration’s agenda and initiatives for military action in Iraq.

The Iraq War conflict reporting in many ways paralleled the content of the pre-invasion period reporting and largely continued the one-sided reporting which supported the U.S. administration by remaining pro-American and primarily depicting the U.S. as victorious and successful (Masland et al., 2003; Kolmer and Semetko, 2009; Thussu and Freedman, 2003; Monahan, 2010; Hoskins, 2004; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Altheide and Grimes, 2005; Dimitrova et al., 2005). The principal frame of these reports focused on U.S. military achievements and the certainty that victory would be imminent (Masland et al., 2003). Televised coverage primarily focused on the fighting itself, with very little time dedicated to analysing or contextualising the military action or providing a discussion about the larger implications. Kolmer and Semetko (2009) provide statistical research which reveals that during the first two weeks of the war, 61.7% of the televised coverage in the U.S. covered the ‘military action’, while only 9% discussed ‘political aspects’. The coverage of live action was perceived to be much more captivating for audiences than a thorough political analysis of the war’s complex issues, and thus contextualisation or consideration of the wider implications of the conflict were largely excluded for what was perceived as more ‘entertaining’ footage (Thussu and Freedman, 2003; Monahan, 2010; Hoskins, 2004; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Altheide and Grimes, 2005; Kolmer and Semetko, 2009). Thus, the impact of televised news and the ‘entertainment factor’, highlighted later as a structural factor significant during this period, appear to be particularly relevant when considering this theme.

Dimitrova et al. (2005) provide statistics about the online Iraq War reporting which produced similar results and reveal that the primary focus of the online coverage was on the ‘military action’ and ‘human interest stories’. These two narrative frames also closely connect with the ‘entertainment factor’ by presenting combat footage and the latest military technologies, as well as the personal stories about the U.S. soldiers which promoted patriotism and unity, and these stories were perceived to be most exciting for audiences. By focusing on these two key themes, the online Iraq War reporting contributed to the principal narrative that positively represented the U.S. and affirmed that the war was going well, which in turn created a platform that would support continued action in Iraq.

The presentation of military and civilian casualties during the Iraq War also reveals the extent to which this conflict reporting was one-sided. Stories primarily focused on the relatively few U.S. deaths which depicted the war in a manner that glorified the conflict and misrepresented the death and destruction that was taking place in reality (DiMaggio, 2010; Miller, 2004). DiMaggio (2010) utilises CNN as a case study between June 2006 and April 2007 to reveal that while only 25% of coverage discussed Iraqi casualties killed by U.S. forces, Iraqis killed by other Iraqis received three and a half times more coverage and U.S. casualties were covered three times more often than Iraqi casualties. Dimitrova et al. (2005) provide similar statistics about the online coverage and reveal that only 14% of the conflict reporting placed blame on the U.S. for civilian casualties. Emphasising a ‘clean’ or ‘sanitised’ war ignored the Iraqi coalition and civilian deaths, which were significantly higher than U.S. casualties, and which in turn encouraged the largely supportive and positive portrayal of the U.S. military initiatives in Iraq (Miller, 2004). The relatively low casualties presented in the U.S. media was utilised as a measure of success; however, because there was no contextualisation or gauge which would reveal the magnitude or ratio of these deaths, the numbers themselves were misleading (Boettcher and Cobb, 2006).

Overall, the research demonstrates how Iraq War conflict reporting was largely uncritical of the U.S. administration and its initiatives and agenda and depicted a positive image of the U.S. and its military involvement in Iraq, while either ignoring or discrediting the Iraqi perspectives. Kolmer and Semetko (2009) present research which reveals that only 9.3% of U.S. news stories positively represented the Iraqi collation, which supports the contention that these heavily one-sided stories did not provide balanced coverage, or allow the presentation of dissenting views or alternative perspectives. Robinson, Goddard and Parry (2009, p.679) add that although embedded journalists may have appeared to provide the most legitimate and first-hand accounts of the conflict, these journalists actually "eschew objective reporting in times of war in favour either of implicit support for government war objectives or of explicit cheerleading for their national military". As a key researcher in this field, Anthony DiMaggio expressed in an interview that while it may be controversial to acknowledge the propaganda which exists in U.S. conflict reporting, it is a current and ongoing feature of the U.S. media, and a theme which was very much evident in the Iraq War reporting (DiMaggio, 2016). The propaganda model theorises that state propaganda in media leads to a singular perspective in reporting, of the type that was evident during the Iraq War coverage. Agenda-setting theory also considers how framing is utilised to set polices and pursue interests, as this section has similarly determined how these news reports were largely framed to support the U.S. administration's initiatives and agenda for military action in Iraq and the broader 'war on terror' mega-narrative. This chapter as well as subsequent chapters will explore the selection of specific information, images, and language throughout Iraq War conflict reporting, which helped generate the one-sided coverage in support of the war and created a platform for both the U.S. administration and U.S. media to pursue interests and agendas.

This section has argued that largely one-sided reporting which remained uncritical of the U.S. administration's intelligence claims or overall agenda was the overarching theme throughout the pre-invasion period and Iraq War conflict reporting and thus begins to point to apparent unequal power relations in the production of this coverage. The

following chapters will draw from this analysis in order to address this issue and consider how U.S. state-media relations and the specific strategies utilised by both the U.S. administration and the U.S. media influenced and shaped this principal theme. The following section will illustrate four supporting themes and features, which, it will be argued, concurrently reinforced each other and ultimately contributed to shaping the overall Iraq War reporting theme discussed here.

5.2.2 Supporting Themes and Features which Contributed to and Shaped the Principal Narrative

5.2.2.1 Dramatisation through Images and the 'Entertainment Factor'

Several researchers (Thussu and Freedman, 2003; Monahan, 2010; Hoskins, 2004; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Altheide and Grimes, 2005; Seelye, 2002; Kellner, 2004) have described the pre-invasion and Iraq War conflict reporting as a 'dramatised' period of reporting which ultimately supported military action in Iraq. This section will analyse first the dramatisation of the news in the aftermath of September 11th and then during the Iraq War, and demonstrate how the use of images and 'entertainment factor' contributed to this glorified and highly emotional coverage. The Literature Review has highlighted how the use of images can be powerful, but tends to evoke emotions rather than provide significant insight into the dynamics or intricacies of an event. Therefore, images can lead to a more 'dramatised' form of reporting, placing more focus on this emotional response through stimulating images or footage, rather than on an analysis or explanation of these visuals (Altheide and Grimes, 2005; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Seelye, 2002; Kellner, 2004). Similarly, the Literature Review has described how the 'entertainment factor', often facilitated by a heavy use of images, generates a similar effect by enrapturing audiences, but typically does not provide in-depth analysis or exploration of the wider implications of a story. This section will thus argue that the dramatisation of reporting was generated in large part by the emphasis on televised

reporting and the 24-hour news cycle, which this chapter will later highlight as key structural factors during Iraq War reporting.

The pre-invasion period has first been largely categorised as a ‘dramatisation’ by researches in large part due to the continuous oversaturation of sensational images and extreme employment of the ‘entertainment factor’, where little analysis or context was included to support this footage (Thussu and Freedman, 2003; Monahan, 2010; Hoskins, 2004; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Altheide and Grimes, 2005; Seelye, 2002; Kellner, 2004). Monahan’s (2010) research found that the primary frame most widely reported during the pre-invasion period was the ‘responsibility and retaliation’ frame which focused on both the allocation of blame for the attacks as well as how the U.S. should respond. This frame provided a narrow range of discussion which ‘pointed fingers’ at the aggressors, suggesting who the U.S. should target and how this retribution should be sought; however it did not tend to provide a wider analysis about the political or foreign policy implications of potential military action, thus “giving the Bush administration a moral high ground to respond militarily” (Monahan, 2010, p. 65). The extent to which this narrative was present in reports may in part account for the misperceptions and ‘us versus them’ narratives which will be discussed in the following sections, as well as ultimately contributing to the construction of a narrative which would support an eventual invasion of Iraq. The statistics from Monahan (2010) also reveal that the second most prevalent frame during this period was the ‘dealing and healing’ frame which were typically emotional reports, often covered from ground zero, which focused on supporting a patriotic message of American unity and perseverance. Images and stories about resilient fire-fighters and everyday heroes were positioned to generate this frame which promoted patriotism and national unity, but also constantly reminded people of the physical and emotional destruction of the attacks. These frames will link closely with the U.S. administration’s utilisation of the ‘‘politics of fear’’ and purposeful language as elements of its implicit strategies, discussed in Chapter 6, and the U.S. media’s strategy to appeal to audiences’ sentiments, explored in Chapter 7.

Monahan (2010, p.171) asserts that the emphasis of these frames and reports during the pre-invasion period generated an emotionally impactful narrative by focusing primarily on the dramatic aftermath of September 11th, which was a narrative "socially constructed" through heavy use of images and a strong focus on the 'entertainment factor' of reporting, rather than in-depth analysis or debate about the potential political and foreign policy implications. Monahan (2010, p.171) concludes that "the story was crafted and told in a way that made these events a shocking and traumatic threat to the moral order and cultural fabric of our society". These frames were effectively established through the oversaturation and repetition of emotional images and sound bites which played into the ''politics of fear'' and the fearful and uncertain state after September 11th. Iconic images of fire-fighters, police, and soldiers were utilised to evoke a sense of solidarity, bravery, and safety, feelings which the American public were seeking after the attacks (Thussu and Freedman, 2003; Miller, 2004; Hoskins, 2004; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003). This dramatised reporting thus appears to have generated an emotional narrative through the continuous and dramatised coverage, and appeared to widely be subject to the 'entertainment factor' (Monahan, 2010; Thussu and Freedman, 2003; Miller, 2004; Hoskins, 2004; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Altheide and Grimes, 2005).

Several researchers (Altheide and Grimes, 2005; Kellner, 2004; Monahan, 2010) add that the crucial contextual information, which would have helped to illuminate the key issues and decisions about how best to respond to the attacks, was kept out of news reports because this in-depth analysis would not be as entertaining; therefore the primary narrative of the reports revolved around generalisations of terrorism which developed into symbolism of fear and evil. Monahan (2010, pp.10-11) observes that "even though this was a major moment in U.S. history destined to have enormous cultural and political consequences, and therefore arguably demanding more measured and balanced coverage and discourse, the dominant narrative through which these events were communicated to the public was transformed into a dramatic tale that more closely mirrored popular fiction than detailed journalistic inquiry. September 11 was fashioned as

an emotional story that, like so many popular television dramas, was stocked with stirring accounts, heartfelt moments, captivating images, harrowing encounters, and compelling characters". Kellner (2004, p.144) adds that "the images and discourses of the US television networks framed the terrorist attacks to whip up war hysteria, while failing to provide a coherent account of what happened, why it happened, and what would count as responsible responses". Monahan (2010, p. 10) concludes that "present[ing] these events in the most dramatic and emotional terms severely limited the stock of frames...to make sense of the attacks. This, in turn, allowed the dramatic, emotional, theatrical, and simplistic representations of this complex and consequential historical moment to influence how political leaders, media officials, and others have constructed and used the dominant notions of 9/11 in the years since. As a result, September 11 became a story primarily about patriotism, loss, and heroes, and, for the most part, *not* a story about U.S. foreign relations, U.S. military policy, poor interagency coordination, government inefficiencies, or other interpretive frames". Therefore, while the attacks were one of the most highly covered events in U.S. history, reporting was largely dramatised and dominated by the 'entertainment factor' rather than providing in-depth insight or context for what had occurred, or any analysis about the range of potential responses to the attacks and the political or foreign policy implications of possible military action.

The dramatisation of the reporting also supported the continuous reiteration of the misperceptions, which will be discussed in next section, through the 'entertainment factor' and use of images to generate narratives which subsequently supported an eventual invasion in Iraq. Hoskins (2004) discusses a specific image of Hussein firing a gun into the air which was repeatedly broadcast, and contends that while the image itself provided little context or explanation, news reports interpreted it to demonise Hussein and present him to the American public as a hostile and unpredictable madman. The dramatisation of reporting therefore appears to have been a platform for the U.S. administration, as agenda-setting theory suggests, to pursue its agenda to invade Iraq, through use of these selective images and by relying on the 'entertainment factor' which in turn effectively

framed a narrative which supported its military initiatives. The following chapter will highlight the strategies employed by the U.S. administration which may have encouraged the dramatisation of these reports and thus shaped conflict reporting in a manner which would support its agenda. The apparent promotion of state propaganda in support of the U.S. administration's agenda, as theorised by the propaganda model, also suggests that dramatisation to an extent aided the generation of these seemingly one-sided reports.

During the Iraq War, the dramatisation of reports continued by focusing on the glorification of the combat and military action. Schechter (2012, p.309) asserts that by "focusing on the 'action' in Iraq, [the U.S. media] avoided putting the war into the larger global context". Hoskins (2004) notes that the oversaturation of images coming from embedded journalists in the conflict zone made reports disorienting, distracting, and difficult to understand, in large part because of the lack of analysis or contextualisation around these images and footage. Al-Marashi (2004) provides data about the news coverage during the first ninety days of the war which reveals that only 10% of interviews requested analysis of the war. This statistic suggests that instead there was a primary focus on presenting entertaining stories, sensational images, and concise sound bites which would captivate audiences rather than providing substance or contextualisation about the complexities of the conflict.

Hoskins (2004, p.47) observes that although the Iraq War was a highly televised conflict, this did not necessarily create more transparency, and asserts that "the significance of the content of news diminishes as the demand for immediacy increases". The expectation of instant and continuous information and reliance upon televised news as the principal source of conflict reporting was more prevalent during the Iraq War than ever before, which appears to have promoted speed of reporting rather than depth (Hoskins, 2004). Spencer (2005, p.153) adds that the landscape of 24-hour televised coverage, which will be highlighted later in this chapter as a significant structural factor, created a platform on which the threats and fears initiated during the pre-invasion reporting could be reworked and re-established in order to "intensify and concentrate the

apparent seriousness of the situation, thus reinforcing the credibility of retaliatory response and counter-response in the process". Therefore to a larger extent than had happened in past wars, the conflict reporting during the Iraq War appeared to have provided news reports which were primarily dramatised, lacked depth, and seldom offered analysis which may have provided contextualisation for the complex intricacies of the war. Thus, the dramatisation of reporting also appears to have been a feature which contributed to generating the one-sided narrative and uncritical content of the Iraq War reporting, by promoting patriotism, supporting military action, and discouraging critique or debate. Also largely generated due to the emphasis on televised news, the next section will analyse the several inaccurate misperceptions which were another prevalent theme throughout this conflict reporting.

5.2.2.2 Establishment of Inaccurate Misperceptions

This section will highlight the inaccurate misperceptions which were established during the pre-invasion period and which perpetuated throughout the Iraq War conflict reporting. The three principal misperceptions were: the link between Saddam Hussein and Iraq with al-Qaeda and the September 11th terrorist attack; the existence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction; and the notion that an invasion was widely supported globally, and specifically by the Iraqi people, because an invasion would serve to be a 'liberation' (Kull, Ramsay and Lewis, 2003; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Spencer, 2005; Rutherford, 2004; Gore, 2007; Hiebert, 2003; Thussu and Freedman, 2012). To an extent, these misperceptions were able to be widely circulated throughout the news as a result of the landscape of the U.S. media which focused on televised 24-hour coverage and the decrease in investigatory journalism, discussed in later sections as key structural factors, which in combination contributed to unconfirmed speculative claims or unsubstantiated reports. The dramatisation of reports and 'entertainment factor' which presented an oversaturation of images and continuous information also appear to have provided a platform for these misperceptions to be spread through coverage without in-depth

analysis, contextualisation, or investigation into the truth of the claims. These misperceptions can be considered as part of the 'responsibility and retaliation' frame, highlighted in the previous section, because this frame specifically targeted Iraq for blame and thus began to generate a narrative which would support an invasion. Therefore, these misperceptions were integral features which contributed to generating the one-sided and uncritical conflict reporting, categorised as the principal theme of the Iraq War coverage.

Although there was a lack of substantial evidence, pre-invasion news reports posited a direct link between Hussein and terrorism by connecting him to al-Qaeda, and thus targeting Hussein and Iraq as a part of the broader 'war on terror' narrative, in some instances even equating Hussein to Hitler (Rutherford, 2004; Spencer, 2005; Gore, 2007; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006). Though there was no indisputable proof of the existence of weapons mass destruction, the conflict reporting during this period widely claimed that Iraq was developing these weapons (Hiebert, 2003; Spencer, 2005; Gore, 2007). Together, these two misperceptions created the perception that Iraq was dangerous and posed an imminent threat to American security, and thus began to generate an overall narrative that military action in Iraq was a necessary cause (Gore, 2007; Rutherford, 2004). In addition, this pre-invasion reporting also asserted that the Iraqi people welcomed U.S. military involvement and liberation from Hussein who was a dangerous and evil dictator (Hiebert, 2003; Gore, 2007; Rutherford, 2004; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006). This was another misperception which was inaccurate, however, it was widely reported to present a potential invasion as a means to 'free' the Iraqi people, rather than as an aggressive American military invasion (Rutherford, 2004; Gore, 2007; Hiebert, 2003).

In combination, these widely reported misperceptions shifted the focus from the September 11th terrorist attacks to placing blame and the need for retaliation on Iraq, and positioned Iraq as synonymous with the 'war on terror'. The propaganda model theorises how state propaganda in reporting, such as the demonising of Hussein, creates an uncritical and one-sided narrative, which agenda-setting theory suggests in turn helps the

state pursue its agenda and set policy, in this case by generating a narrative which would support the U.S. administration's military and political agenda to invade Iraq. Agenda-setting theory points to the use of selective language to shape information, such was evident throughout the construction of all the misperceptions, to generate frames which promoted the specific policy. The selective use of language and information to shape perceptions about Hussein, impressions about weapons of mass destruction, and the desires of the Iraqi people, helped to construct frames which justified military action and supported the broader 'war on terror' mega-narrative which was evident throughout the content of Iraq War reporting. Chapter 6 will illustrate a connection between these misperceptions and the U.S. administration's implicit strategy to utilise language to demonise Hussein and create a link between Iraq and September 11th, and Chapter 7 will also consider how and why the U.S. media's framing strategy perpetuated these misperceptions. Thus, considering the role of these misperceptions in contributing to the widespread one-sided narratives during the pre-invasion period will be particularly relevant for examining the politics of conflict reporting and the impact U.S. state-media relations on this coverage.

The three main misperceptions which were established during the pre-invasion period continued to be apparent during the Iraq War reporting. Demonising Hussein through images and unsubstantiated claims became even more prevalent across all types of reporting, which in turn continued to perpetuate the narrative which justified U.S. military involvement (Thussu and Freedman, 2012; Rutherford, 2004; Dimitrova et al., 2005). The portrait of Hussein as an evil dictator and terrorist was utilised to counter claims by Iraqi leadership that the U.S. invasion was an unjustified aggression and that the Bush administration was illegally trying to conquer their nation (Rutherford, 2004). The extensive negative portrayal of Hussein's regime throughout U.S. media created the impression that the Iraqis were lying and trying to establish inaccurate propaganda themselves, in an attempt to unjustly taint the U.S. administration's cause (Thussu and Freedman, 2012; Rutherford, 2004). Thus, these allegations by the Iraqi coalition were

largely discredited because of the reputation which this misperception had attributed to the Iraqi leadership, and the demonisation of Hussein and narrative supportive of the war continued to be widely published in the U.S. coverage. The misperception that the U.S. was 'liberating' the Iraq people from dictatorship and that the American military would be welcomed was also present throughout the Iraq War reporting (Snow and Taylor, 2006; Berenger, 2004; Rutherford, 2004; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Dimitrova et al., 2005). Rutherford (2004) notes that even when there was clear opposition and discontent about the U.S. military involvement from Iraqi state representatives and civilians, the U.S. conflict reporting continued to largely portray the invasion of Iraq as a 'liberation' and 'freeing' of the Iraqi people.

The claims of evidence of weapons of mass destruction similarly grew across all types of reporting during the Iraq War and served as continued justification for U.S. military action in Iraq (Snow and Taylor, 2006; DiMaggio, 2010; Mermin, 2004; Dimitrova et al., 2005). One of the major ways this misperception maintained apparent credibility was because the Iraq War reporting did not distinguish between nuclear weapons and biological weapons, which were all placed under the 'weapons of mass destruction' label (Mermin, 2004). For example, on 30 May 2003, President Bush declared that "'for those who say we haven't found the banned manufacturing devises or banned weapons, they're wrong. We found them'" (Kull, Ramsay and Lewis, 2003, p.592). The decline of investigatory journalism, a significant structural factor highlighted later in this chapter, is thus particularly relevant when considering how this misperception continued to widely appear in news reports, as the important distinction between nuclear and biological weapons was not scrutinised more closely within Iraq War conflict reporting. The use of language as well as other official and implicit strategies by the U.S. administration discussed in the next chapter will also provide insight into how this misperception may have been so prevalent in news reports.

Thus, these misperceptions appear to have been significant in contributing to generating the principal theme of this coverage, the largely one-sided and often

misleading conflict reporting which primarily depicted pro-American stances and supported the U.S. administration's agenda and initiatives. CBS reporter Dan Rather summarises the appearance of the misperceptions across the Iraq War coverage and concludes that "'these news organizations made a decision - consciously or unconsciously, but unquestionably in a climate of fear - to accept the overall narrative frame given them by the White House, a narrative that went like this: Saddam Hussein, brutal dictator, harbored weapons of mass destruction and, because of his supposed links to al Qaeda, this could not be tolerated" (Schechter, 2012, pp.310-311). The following chapters will seek to provide insight into the politics of conflict reporting by considering the extent to which U.S. state-media relations and the specific strategies of the U.S. administration and U.S. media concurrently generated and encouraged these misperceptions. Collectively, these misperceptions appear to not only have played a role in the ongoing justification of the U.S. military action in Iraq and promoting the greater 'war on terror' mega-narrative, but also in establishing the 'us versus them' narrative, which will be discussed in the next section.

5.2.2.3 'Us versus Them' Narrative

The 'us versus them' narrative was a frame which positioned the U.S. against Iraq, and is linked to the broader 'war on terror', however this narrative largely relied upon stereotypes and generalisations, specifically about Hussein as a dictator and the connection to terrorism in Iraq, that were often unfounded and largely the product of speculative rhetoric or unfounded claims (Miller, 2004; Berenger, 2004; Lewis, 2012). Lewis (2012, p.264) summarises this narrative as one which "conjur[es] images of dark, sinister forces that, for various unexplained reasons, are antagonistic to what are often referred to as 'Western values'...referred to within the vague terms of this antagonism, as evil-doers harbouring a hatred of freedom and democratic traditions". Lewis (2012, pp.265-266) adds that focusing on the "role of Islam in the narrative represses the question of political motivation...[and] sanctions foreign-policy interventions aimed at

curtailing Islam or Islamic regimes" which thus contributed to shifting focus to Iraq and building a platform which would support military action.

The oversaturation of images and the ‘entertainment factor’ which helped promote the dramatisation of reports and inaccurate misperceptions are also closely linked to this feature of the coverage. Hoskins (2004) has highlighted how during the pre-invasion period Hussein was demonised through continuous stock images, and that these images did not often promote critical analysis but rather reinforced stereotypes. Images of Hussein typically showed him with guns, angry expressions, or next to pictures of violence which depicted him as a tyrannical and dangerous dictator. Meanwhile, images of American fire-fighters, police officers, soldiers, and the public were presented as valiant and brave citizens (Hoskins, 2004; Monahan, 2010). These images generated a ‘good guy’ versus ‘bad guy’ scenario that placed the American people, military, culture, and ideology in direct opposition to Hussein, Iraq, radical Islam, and terrorism (de Landtsheer et al., 2014; Thussu and Freedman, 2012; Hoskins, 2004; Berenger, 2004; Rutherford, 2004). In the aftermath of September 11th, this ‘us versus them’ narrative positioned Iraq as an imminent threat to the U.S. by correlating Hussein with ‘terror’ and distancing the American culture and ideals from those in Iraq (Norris, Kern and Just, 2003). Steuter and Wills (2010) contend that the danger of this ‘us versus them’ narrative is that it tends to oversimplify the ‘war on terror’ and promotes generalisations and rhetoric that don’t provide in-depth information or analysis. Thus, these authors argue that this narrative reduced complex issues to a superficial narrative that divided ‘good’ and ‘evil’, without providing further contextualisation or deeper understanding into these labels (Steuter and Wills, 2010).

Farnen (2014, p.287) specifically draws a connection between dramatisation and this ‘us versus them’ narrative by highlighting that “when an administration and media treat terrorism as high drama, the mythmaking ability of the press is enhanced and military intervention... is legitimated in a... good-guy or bad-guy scenario”. However, Choi (2004) and Kamalipour (2004) add that this ‘axis of evil’ which equated ‘terrorism’ with ‘evil’,

‘other’, and ‘danger’ was inherently flawed, especially when applied to Iraq. Norris, Kern and Just (2003, p.11) contend that this “terrorist and anti-terrorist frame...never provide a comprehensive explanation of all aspects of any terrorist, leaving some important puzzles unresolved, while accounting for those factors which best fit the particular interpretation of events”. But regardless of a lack of evidentiary support or contextualisation of the images and rhetoric, this ‘us versus them’ narrative was prevalent throughout pre-invasion reports and helped create a foundation which would support an eventual invasion of Iraq (Rutherford, 2004).

The power of language and the selection of specific word choices to create meaning and shape stories, as examined in the Literature Review, are particularly relevant to consider for the perpetuation of this narrative. Categorising the U.S. military as ‘heroes’ while labelling the Iraqi coalition as ‘rebels’, ‘insurgents’, or ‘rogue fighters’ imbues the U.S. with positive connotations, and ensures Iraq is associated with more aggressive, dangerous language (DiMaggio, 2010; Steuter and Wills, 2010; Monahan, 2010). Therefore, as theorised by the propaganda model, state propaganda often leads to a singular perspective in reporting as a consequence, which in this case is apparent through a narrative which encouraged pro-American labels and perspectives, ultimately contributing to the largely one-sided perspective illustrated as the principal theme of Iraq War conflict reporting. Additionally, as suggested by agenda-setting theory, purposefully chosen language helped to generate a narrative frame which juxtaposed the U.S. to Iraq, and in turn supported the U.S. administration’s agenda to pursue military action in Iraq. The prevalence of this narrative will thus be important for the following chapters, as they analyse the politics of conflict reporting and consider how U.S. state-media relations and the specific strategies of both the U.S. administration and the U.S. media encouraged this theme.

The ‘us versus them’ narrative which positioned the U.S. ideology, culture, and values as juxtaposed to those of Iraq continued and strengthened during the Iraq War conflict reporting. By repeating and reemphasising this narrative after the invasion, it continued to

justify and validate the U.S. military action in Iraq by constructing a perception that the ‘war on terror’ was an ongoing battle of ideologies and ‘right versus wrong’ or ‘good versus evil’ that would continue to be an important reason to support the American campaign (Steuter and Wills, 2010; Hoskins, 2010). In similar ways to the pre-invasion period, this ‘us versus them’ narrative oversimplified the conflict and focused on rhetoric and generalisations about Hussein and Iraq’s links to terrorism, rather than providing analysis or contextualisation for the complex issues of the war. Lewis (2012, pp.267-268) concludes that this narrative “pitches liberal Western values under attack from an aggressive Islam, the terrorist narrative weaves cultural features of everyday life into a hard news story about fear, violence and war...unfortunately it is a narrative that conceals more than it reveals. It distorts both the scale and character of the terrorist threat, encouraging ill-informed, aggressive responses". Reducing the coverage to ambiguous labels thus created a clear message that defined Iraq as ‘other’ and ‘enemy’, but this narrative did not promote an in-depth analysis of the conflict or any opportunity to consider alternative perspectives, including the Iraqi point of view. The next section will highlight another feature, the overreliance on official sources, which may have contributed to the prevalence of this narrative and which was also apparent throughout the pre-invasion and Iraq War reporting.

5.2.2.4 Overreliance on Official Sources

The overreliance on official sources, utilised extensively as the principal source during both the pre-invasion period and Iraq War, was also a significant feature which played a role in generating the principal theme of a one-sided narrative in this conflict reporting. ‘Official sources’ refers to government representatives, such members of the administration, military spokespersons, or other federal government officials (DiMaggio, 2010; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Berenger, 2004; Graber and Dunaway, 2015). The extent to which the business considerations of outlets and journalists, such as the desire to appear credible and legitimate, may have promoted this trend will be assessed in

Chapter 7 during the examination of the strategies of the U.S. media. The following chapter, which highlights the U.S. administration's official and implicit strategies to influence conflict reporting, including the implementation of official guidelines and implicit pressures, will also add insight into why the overreliance on official sources during Iraq War reporting was so extensive. The dependence on official government sources may also in part be a result of a decreasing pattern of investigatory journalism, a structural factor which will be discussed in the next section.

Several researchers (DiMaggio, 2010; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Berenger, 2004) observe the overreliance on official sources during the pre-invasion period, where direct quotes were extensively utilised when presenting intelligence information, such as reports on the existence of weapons of mass destruction. Alternative sources tended to be largely ignored by reporters and media outlets, or discredited by U.S. administration representatives. On televised U.S. coverage following the September 11th attacks, only 6% of official representatives who commentated or were interviewed were sceptical about the necessity of going to war, and less than 1% of sources were associated with the anti-war movement (Tumber and Palmer, 2004). The limited range of sources thus allowed bias in reporting and a narrow perspective on the intelligence information or any analysis about how to respond to the attacks. The U.S. administration's uncontested perspective and claims cited as fact appears to have therefore helped to specifically perpetuate the inaccurate misperceptions and 'us versus them' narrative. Largely relying on the voices and opinions of U.S. government officials also arguably helped to create a platform for state propaganda, which, as the propaganda model theorises, directly impacts upon the narrative of news stories, supporting the claim here about the one-sided nature of Iraq War conflict reporting. Selective information created through this limited scope of sources, as agenda-setting theory suggests, can purposefully frame narratives which help pursue an agenda, as policy setting occurs through conflict reporting when information is purposefully limited or narrow, such as the overreliance on official sources during the pre-

invasion period which primarily promoted the U.S. administration's perspective, initiatives, and avowed agenda for military action in Iraq.

The overreliance of official sources largely continued during the Iraq War reporting. DiMaggio (2010) provides statistics in his research which indicates the extent to which official sources were utilised during the Iraq War. Using CNN as a case study between June 2006 and April 2007, the data reveals that only 5% of guests were American non-state or non-media representatives, less than 2% were representatives from foreign leadership or academia, and no anti-war protesters were interviewed. This provides powerful evidence to support the contention that there was an overreliance on official sources during the Iraq War coverage. Televised media outlets would bring 'specialists' on air to comment on the conflict, however these guests were typically former U.S. military generals or government representatives, and they did not expand beyond the official perspective which was being presented (Berenger, 2004; Graber and Dunaway, 2015). This tendency was present in online news coverage as well, and Dimitrova et al. (2005) observe how despite the wide range of communication technologies and access to multiple sources of information that might have been be available, the Iraq War online reporting still largely relied on government and military officials as the primary source of information.

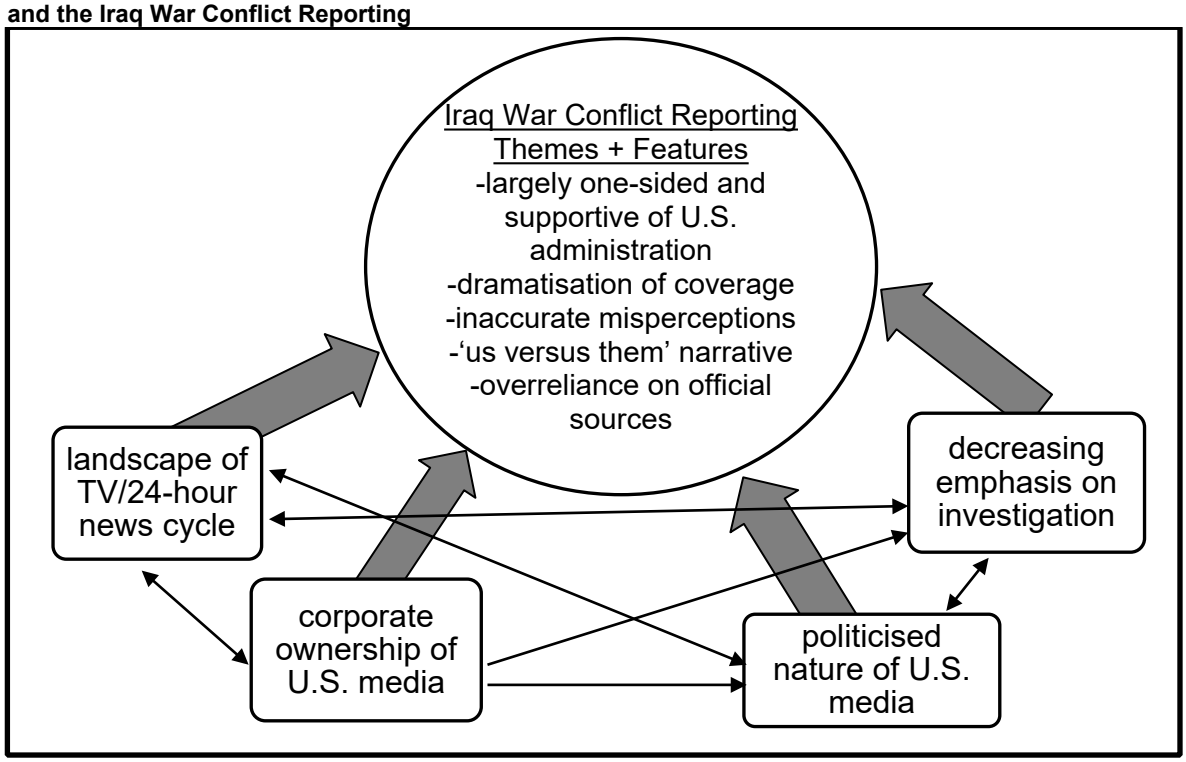
This examination of the pre-invasion period and Iraq War conflict reporting content has argued that the dramatisation of reports, inaccurate misperceptions, 'us versus them' narrative, and overreliance on official sources were features and themes demonstrably prevalent in news stories, and which contributed to the main observation, that the conflict reporting was largely one-sided and predominantly favoured the U.S. administration's initiatives and intended agenda. This section has thus demonstrated how the Iraq War conflict reporting represents a significant shift from the Vietnam War and the Gulf War coverage which, albeit to different extents, encompassed conflict reporting which tended to be more critical in outlook and more diverse in its sources. Chapter 6 will analyse the

U.S. administration's formal and informal strategies, including the implementation of official guidelines and implicit pressures on journalists, while Chapter 7 will highlight the U.S. media's strategies, such as pursuing business interests through framing, in order to assess how these strategies may have concurrently impacted upon Iraq War conflict reporting. This thesis will build upon the analysis of Iraq War reporting content undertaken here, in order to address the politics of conflict reporting and the final research sub-question for this thesis, by examining the influence of U.S. state-media relations on this coverage. The next section will discuss several factors which will contextualise the structure of the U.S. media in order to assess their influence and role in Iraq War conflict reporting.

5.3 Structural Factors Affecting the Iraq War Conflict Reporting

This section will discuss four structural factors which impacted upon the Iraq War coverage and which are vitally important to consider when analysing the politics of conflict reporting and the influence of U.S. state-media relations. These structural factors include the landscape of the 24-hour televised news cycle, the corporate ownership of the U.S. media, the politicised nature of the U.S. media, and a decreasing emphasis on investigative reporting. These four structural factors will be examined by highlighting key literature as well as illuminating these insights with perspectives from politicians and journalists who had to navigate these factors, thus providing first-hand perspectives on how these factors impacted upon news reports. Therefore, this section will contextualise structural factors of the U.S. media, and demonstrate how they promoted and mutually reinforced each other. These links and connections are illustrated in Figure 5.2. It will be argued that these structural factors played a key role in the Iraq War conflict reporting themes and created a platform for the employment of the U.S. administration and U.S. media's strategies.

Figure 5.2 The Structural Factors of the U.S. Media and the Connections and Impacts upon Each Other and the Iraq War Conflict Reporting



5.3.1 The Landscape of the U.S. News Media: televised and 24-hour coverage

Chapter 4 illustrated how the growth of technology led to televised news coverage and the emergence of the 24-hour news cycle, and these were norms which continued to be prevalent during the Iraq War conflict reporting. This section will highlight various ways in which they had a specific impact on this coverage. After September 11th, marking the beginning of the 'pre-invasion period' in this study, 81% of American people relied on TV news as the primary and most trusted source of information about a conflict (Bahador, 2007). Therefore, as had been evident during the Gulf War, television continued to be the main platform for conflict reporting, and the emphasis on televised news existed to an even larger extent during the Iraq War. The rapid speed of reporting and continuous information as a result of 24-hour televised news thus became an established norm and expectation that was a significant element of the landscape of the U.S. media during the Iraq War (Bahador, 2007; Cushion and Lewis, 2010). Thus the emphasis on televised

conflict reporting will be considered in order to understand how this landscape of the U.S. media may have contributed to the themes and features of Iraq War conflict reporting.

The Literature Review highlighted the potential problematic impacts of 24-hour televised coverage, and several of these issues were apparent during the Iraq War as a consequence of the concentrated focus of televised coverage. First, the immediate access to information and news reports resulting from continuous 24-hour news can be problematic, because in order to fill the air space and captivate audiences with exciting coverage, the 24-hour news cycle tends to promote superficial coverage which trivialises complex issues, often over-saturating the reports with the relentless feed of information and images (Miller, 2004; Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010; Schechter, 2003; Culbert, 2005; Hoskins, 2004; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Altheide and Grimes, 2005). This issue points to the business considerations of the U.S. media, which will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 7. Sabrina Siddiqui, a Washington D.C. based journalist for *The Guardian* declared in an interview for this study that "there is a 24-hour news environment in the U.S. that is incomparable to anywhere else in the world. Everything and every incremental update are expected to be reported on" (Siddiqui, 2017). Siddiqui (2017) thus highlights a problematic consequence of the nature of the U.S. media and how this 24-hour cycle promotes "information overload", such that a single issue or statement is not often analysed or contextualised and instead is often reduced to a series of sound bites that are difficult to understand in-depth. The rapid production of reports arguably reduces complex issues to simple stories or headlines, rather than allowing time for commentators to draw out and evaluate the wider implications and intricacies of these issues, before moving onto the next new and exciting piece of information. The analysis of the content of Iraq War conflict reporting has similarly highlighted how the focus on entertaining and continuous news often lacked depth or critical analysis and may have contributed to promoting themes such as dramatisation and misperceptions in the coverage.

The Literature Review has also illustrated how televised reporting often relies on a heavy use of images, which can be effective in evoking specific emotions in response to

the image; however, typically such reporting provides little information or context. The previous section demonstrated that the televised coverage of the pre-invasion period in particular invoked the 'politics of fear' by utilising sensational or frightening images of September 11th destruction, victims, and response teams (Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Miller, 2004; Thussu and Freedman, 2003; Monahan, 2010). However, while these visuals were emotionally compelling, they did not provide significant understanding or analysis of the attacks, any political implications, or potential military responses (Norris, Kern and Just, 2003). Thus during the pre-invasion period, the 24-hour news cycle tended to promote oversaturation of images which provided little contextualisation, and instead primarily reinstalled the fear and uncertainty felt in the aftermath of September 11th (Monahan, 2010; Thussu and Freedman, 2003; Hoskins, 2004; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003). DiMaggio (2010) and Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2010) similarly note that after the invasion, many of the 'iconic' photos of soldiers and combat were effective in creating a sense of patriotism, unity, and strength, but typically offered little meaningful analysis of the captured moment or the wider implications and dynamics of the conflict.

The extensive television coverage in conjunction with the expectation of 24-hour news thus promoted continuous use of images unaccompanied by significant analysis, and this element of the U.S. media landscape may have promoted themes apparent in the Iraq War reporting, such as dramatised reporting, which was emotionally impactful but provided little contextualisation or critical analysis of the images. When images and information are purposefully chosen, as agenda-setting theory argues, policy can be shaped through the framing of narratives. Therefore, through this televised and 24-hour media landscape, the selection of specific images may have helped the U.S. administration perpetuate its propaganda by setting policy and framing narratives which would support its military agenda in Iraq, a narrative theme evident throughout the content analysis of Iraq War conflict reporting.

The Literature Review has also highlighted the difficulty to find a sufficient amount of material to fill continuous airtime, which is another challenge that emerged from the 24-

hour news cycle and which appears to have influenced Iraq War conflict reporting (Monahan, 2010). Robert Hutton, political journalist and U.S. foreign correspondent for Bloomberg, asserted in an interview that the “nature of the news has changed so much with the rise of technology you are often dealing with uncertain situations under great pressure and this affects accuracy of news stories” (Hutton, 2016). The expectation to fill continuous 24-hour news may have thus often led to unsubstantiated reports that relied on speculation, supposition, or assumptions that had not necessarily been confirmed or fact-checked (Monahan 2010; Cushion and Lewis, 2010). Therefore, the inaccurate misperceptions of Iraq War reporting in particular may have been promoted by the expectation of rapid and continuous reporting in this media landscape.

Another issue with televised conflict reporting is that televised coverage does not promote debate because it is inherently one-sided and “accessible in only one direction. There is no true interactivity, and certainly no conversation” (Gore, 2007, p.16). Hutton and Paul Lisnek, WGN-TV Political Analyst and Host of “Politics Tonight”, make related observations during their interviews about televised conflict reporting and the challenge for journalists’ to present multiple perspectives, because TV naturally encourages the adoption of one angle or viewpoint. Lisnek (2016) notes how “your camera is either in one place or another” and can only point in one direction at a time, which can distort an event or make it difficult to present the various different perspectives. Lisnek provides an example, by depicting how if a journalist reports from the side of protestors, their perspective and cause tend to be highlighted, but if the camera is on the other side, the coverage may depict unruly protestors. Therefore, one of the biggest issues with the heavy reliance on televised news coverage is this inherently one-sided view that it promotes. These insights are important to consider, in conjunction with analysis of the content of news stories, in order to understand how the landscape of the media played a role in engendering the seemingly one-sided Iraq War reporting.

Several issues have been highlighted which arose from the primary focus on televised coverage and the 24-hour news cycle, and which help to provide insight into

how the landscape of the U.S. media played a role in the production and presentation of Iraq War conflict reporting. In particular, the inaccurate misperceptions and dramatised reporting, established as key themes in the Iraq War reporting, appear to have been promoted by the expectation of continuous and rapid televised news, which did not tend to support thorough or critical analysis. In turn, this landscape appears to have been mutually reinforced by the decrease in focus on investigatory journalism, which will be explored later in this chapter, encouraging entertaining and speedy reporting, rather than in-depth examination. Contextualising the landscape of the U.S. media will be of vital importance for the following chapters to consider the role this landscape played in facilitating the employment U.S. administration and U.S. media strategies more readily and the impact of U.S. state-media relations on Iraq War conflict reporting. The next section will discuss how the corporate ownership of the U.S. media was also a structural factor which influenced this coverage.

5.3.2 Corporate Ownership of the U.S. Media

In addition to the landscape of the U.S. media, this section will argue that the type of U.S. media ownership was another structural factor which contributed to shaping the Iraq War conflict reporting. The U.S. media structure is formally independent of the state, and the mainstream media is corporate-owned. As demonstrated in the Literature Review, a corporate-owned media can have a direct impact on conflict reporting, and several researchers (DiMaggio, 2010; Gore, 2007; Spencer, 2005; Snow and Taylor, 2006) highlight a connection between the ownership of U.S. media and the themes which emerged in the Iraq War conflict reporting. Snow and Taylor (2006, p.396) assert that Iraq War conflict reporting was directly shaped by the specific characteristics of the U.S. media because “major media owners are members of the political elite themselves and therefore share similar goals and outcomes. Making profit would appear to rank higher than telling the truth in the minds of some media owners...there is nothing so sacred about having a media system driven by advertising and the bottom line”. Despite being officially

independent from the state, because corporate media owners are often closely connected to the political elite, the U.S. media structure thus must be considered as a factor in generating conflict reporting narratives which closely aligned with the U.S. administration's initiatives and agenda.

In an interview for this study, DiMaggio (2016) adds that this corporate-owned media system was to a large extent responsible for the presence of U.S. administration propaganda in Iraq War conflict reporting, and while nations with state-owned media systems may have more open and obvious forms of propaganda, the U.S. is still "extreme in its use of propaganda... It is seen as controversial to say that about U.S. media when in reality the result seems to be about the same as government-run media, in terms of government dominating what we hear". The literature (Berenger, 2004; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Thussu and Freedman, 2012; DiMaggio, 2010; Gore, 2007; Altheide, 2006; Snow and Taylor, 2006; Altheide and Grimes, 2005; Taylor, 2003; Connelly and Welch, 2005; Rutherford, 2004) supports this observation, and Piety and Foley (2006, p.66) declare that "the United States prides itself on having the freest, most independent, and critical media in the world, and yet the American media, ever since the attacks of 9/11, have toed the line of the Bush administration in an uncritical manner that one would normally associate with state-controlled media". DiMaggio (2010, p.14) argues that "though the corporate media remain formally independent from government, informally, media outlets are dominated by official sources... Sometimes media and government propaganda are one and the same, as in the case of the uncritical dissemination of speeches outlining U.S. foreign policy from government officials". The propaganda model theorises that media ownership is a pillar which generates state propaganda in reporting, and in this light, the corporate ownership of U.S. media can be considered a structural factor which contributed to the apparent presence of propaganda throughout the Iraq War news coverage, in part due to the relationship between the political elite and the media supported through corporate ownership. Information and perspectives may have also been purposefully chosen to consider and further the interests of corporate owners,

which, as agenda-setting theory argues, shape frames which can help set policy through reporting. This type of media structure must then be considered as a structural factor which impacted Iraq War conflict reporting, because journalists and outlets had to be responsive to the requests or perspectives of their corporate owners and the political elite, which may in turn have influenced the frames and narratives of this coverage.

U.S. state-media relations thus appears to in some ways resemble those in state-owned media, as evidenced by the type of coverage aligning with the U.S. administration's agenda and narrative. This section provides evidence for this assertion, by observing that despite having an officially open and independent media, the corporate-owned U.S. media encouraged reporting which aligned with the U.S. administration's initiatives and interests and did not challenge or critique its agenda during the Iraq War. These are themes which have been illustrated as apparent in the both the pre-invasion and Iraq War reporting, thus suggesting the type of media system in the U.S. is a structural factor which must be considered when analysing the Iraq War conflict reporting and dynamics of U.S. state-media relations. Specifically, Chapter 7 will revisit the role that corporate ownership played in the U.S. media's business considerations, which in turn impacted both U.S. state-media relations and the Iraq War coverage. The next section will discuss how the politicised nature of the U.S. media is another relevant structural factor which played a role in shaping these Iraq War conflict reporting themes.

5.3.3. The Politicised Nature of the U.S. Media

One of the more significant shifts from the Vietnam War and the Gulf War was the extent to which the U.S. media was politicised during the Iraq War. Insofar as it pertains to the U.S. media, the term 'politicised' refers to the emerging norm that media outlets and journalists report from a specific political perspective, with a particular political contingency in mind, and often are associated with one political affiliation (Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Pfetsch, 2001; Esmark, 2014). The politicised nature of the U.S. media is a consistent theme noted amongst U.S. journalists, who appear to be highly critical of

their own profession as a result, and will thus be another key factor to consider as a contributing influence during Iraq War conflict reporting.

Fox News anchor and foreign correspondent Adam Housley believes he has observed first-hand how the U.S. media has become politicised, and that this has become an established norm in the U.S. media. In an interview for this study, Housley (2016) contends that his “biggest concern about [the U.S.] media is that journalism is completely political... journalists completely take a side based on political affiliation or dismiss things” and believes that this norm is “dangerous...it is not the journalists’ job to comment on politics, it is to report the news”. David Lawler, a *Daily Telegraph* journalist based in Washington D.C. reporting on U.S. politics, provides an interesting perspective about this norm. Writing for a U.K. newspaper based in Washington D.C. has afforded Lawler with the opportunity to observe and compare how the production of conflict reporting differs in the U.S. from other nations. He describes in an interview how writing for a foreign news source frees him of the obligation to be loyal exclusively with the Republican Party or Democrat Party, and therefore feels he is able to write much more neutrally and openly than his colleagues who are employed by U.S. news outlets (Lawler, 2017). Lawler (2017) reflects on the politicised American media system and declares that it “is not a particularly healthy thing… The biases built into the system [can create] partisanship masquerading as neutral reporting”, impacting not only what stories journalists can report, but how information is reported, which can “affect you in ways that you can’t even imagine”. Lawler therefore highlights a common concern amongst U.S. reporters who often feel they are limited to writing from a certain political angle as a result of U.S. news sources being much more closely aligned with the ‘left’ or ‘right’ than foreign outlets.

This politicised nature of the U.S. media must thus be considered as a potential influential factor which impacted the Iraq War conflict reporting and presentation of information. As theorised by agenda-setting theory, purposefully chosen information, in this case motivated by political affiliation, can create specific frames which directly influence conflict reporting and shape the agenda and policy through these politically

framed narratives. Therefore, the politicised nature of the U.S. media may have contributed to the largely one-sided news stories which supported the U.S. administration's agenda, and as this chapter highlighted earlier, these frames specifically supported the U.S. administration's initiative to pursue military action in Iraq. U.S. media reporting from the political perspective of the U.S. administration could thus have served as a platform for the state's propaganda, which the propaganda model indicates can promote a one-sided narrative, such as the one apparent in the Iraq War coverage. The following chapters which assess the interests and strategies of the U.S. administration and U.S. media to shape conflict reporting will also consider the role of the politicised nature of the media to motivate and execute these strategies.

Lisnek and foreign correspondent Anna Badkhen, who has worked as for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Boston Globe*, Foreign Policy, New Republic, and *The New York Times*, contend that the politicised media was not always a norm in the U.S. and that more recent developments represent a significant shift in U.S. conflict reporting (Lisnek, 2016; Badkhen, 2016). Lisnek substantiates this notion of a considerable shift by using the Vietnam War as an example of a conflict where there was no question or concern about which network was liberal or conservative, but rather was a conflict where the reporters provided an array perspectives and even openly criticised the war and the U.S. administration when there was reason to do so. Lisnek (2016) believes that open critique and challenge of the Iraq War or Bush administration would not have been possible, and declares in an interview that "we won't ever be able to get a Cronkite again today because of the way our news is set up". Chapter 4 highlighted the literature which makes similar assertions that during previous conflicts, to varying degrees, U.S. journalists were able to report openly without necessarily having to consider the political angle of their outlet (Hallin, 1986; Spencer, 2005; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Carruthers, 2000). The extent to which the U.S. media was politicised appears to have been a factor which developed and even escalated after the Gulf War, and is a thus a structural factor of the U.S. media, playing a role in generating the themes in Iraq War reporting. Another shift from previous

conflicts to the Iraq War was a decline in investigatory journalism, which will be discussed in the next section.

5.3.4 Decreasing Emphasis on Investigation

A final structural factor to consider is the decreased emphasis on investigation during the Iraq War. As illustrated in Chapter 4, while the Vietnam War placed exceptional emphasis on investigatory journalism, a significant decrease in this investigatory focus was apparent during the Gulf War, arguably declining further during the Iraq War (Walton, 2010; Bowles, Hamilton and Levy, 2014; Richardson, 2007; Spencer, 2005). This section will explore why this shift occurred and consider how it impacted upon the Iraq War coverage.

During the Iraq War, there were fewer investigatory teams designated for inspecting information, fact-checking, or looking for alternative information or intelligence than during previous conflicts (Walton, 2010; Bowles, Hamilton and Levy, 2014; Ide and Vashisht, 2006). Specifically, the Investigative Reporters and Editors organisation had membership fall by more than 30% in 2003, coinciding with the beginning of the invasion of Iraq (Walton, 2010). Simultaneously, investigatory teams all over the country were being eliminated (Houston, 2010). In 2005 roughly 2,000 investigative journalists lost their jobs at midsize to large U.S. newspapers (Ide and Vashisht, 2006). In this study which researched 86 major U.S. newspapers, Ide and Vashisht (2006) found that only 10 newspapers had more than four investigatory reporters and 61% had no investigatory team at all. As a result, the resources were not in place to seek out hidden stories or information during the Iraq War, and U.S. journalists typically did not have the time or capability to pursue this alternative information, that would require labour intensive inspections and fact-checking (Walton, 2010; Bowles, Hamilton and Levy, 2014).

In an interview for this study, Housley (2016) adds empirical insight into these statistics and observes that while investigatory teams still existed during the Iraq War, they were typically stretched very thinly and did not have the capacity to inspect wide sets

of information, facts, and intelligence in-depth. Housley (2016) contends that the focus and investment in investigatory teams decreased in the U.S. after the 20th century and addresses this trend by explaining that the “loss of investigatory journalism has to do with budgets”. A single investigation can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and it can cost U.S. media outlets over one million dollars to maintain an investigative team (Houston, 2010). Therefore, because investigatory teams were not seen as a necessity for U.S. media outlets to function, they were one of the first resources to be significantly downsized or eliminated. The limited teams and resources for investigatory journalism thus is a structural factor which must be considered when analysing the Iraq War reporting, specifically the inaccurate misperceptions and one-sided narrative which may have been in part generated by the decline in investigatory focus.

Several researchers (Monahan, 2010; Bowles, Hamilton and Levy, 2014; Walton, 2010) have also argued that the landscape of the U.S. media, which placed substantial focus on entertainment with the added expectation of 24-hour continuous news coverage, impacted upon the depth of investigatory vigour during the Iraq War. Downie (2014, p.218) offers insight into this trajectory, and contends that while investigatory journalism may have been a prevalent element of American journalism in the past, changes in audiences and how technology impacted the nature of the U.S. media have “started rapidly undermining the economic model that subsidised much of the investigative reporting that flourished during the resource-rich golden age of American newspapers and commercial broadcasting in the last third of the twentieth century”. In shifting away from investigatory journalism, reporters, resources, and funding instead were reallocated to breaking news and keeping up with the 24-hour news cycle to meet expectations of fast-paced, continuous news, which could have thus impacted the accuracy or precision of reports. Schechter (2012, p.314) observes that “twenty-four-hour cable news channels offered more news, not better news… Investigative reporting had long since given way to 'breaking news' free of context and background”. Therefore, the 24-hour TV news landscape and decline in investigatory journalism appear to have been mutually

reinforcing; the pressure on outlets and journalists to work in a hurry to meet deadlines and publish continuous news, in combination with limited investigatory resources, may have inhibited thorough fact-checking or research into Iraq War reports.

Housley adds empirical insight from his personal experience as a journalist, and emphasises the difficulty in managing to compete with other journalists and outlets, publish news stories quickly, and still seek to meticulously investigate information and stories. Housley (2016) reveals that when gathering information for a story, there are typically large quantities of different sources that are difficult to sift through and which make it challenging to determine which sources and information are credible and which are not. Compounding these complex tasks with the pressure to produce stories quickly and meet deadlines, the investigatory detail and rigour which was a focus in previous conflicts may not have been as possible or realistic during the Iraq War. In another interview for this study, Hutton (2016) adds that in his view this pressure affected investigatory journalism during the Iraq War, because U.S. journalists had a shorter amount of time to write reports and investigate and analyse information as compared to previous conflicts. These experiences point to the increasingly important business considerations of the U.S. media, which Chapter 7 will closely examine as significant elements which largely drove the U.S. media's strategies and impacted both U.S. state-media relations and the Iraq War coverage. During the Iraq War, Housley (2016) thus concludes that as a result of "the decline of investigatory journalism, [American reporters] only questioned what they had to and not what they should have". This shift in the U.S. media, where investigatory teams, resources, and capabilities were significantly decreased, is thus a structural factor which may have contributed to Iraq War reporting themes such as the prevalence of inaccurate misperceptions and a one-sided narrative, as the intelligence and assertions made by U.S. officials may not have been closely inspected by teams specifically delegated to investigation.

James Grimaldi, an investigative reporter for *The Washington Post*, provides another reason for the decrease in prioritising investigative journalism and believes it

stems from ‘government secrecy’ which is a ‘constant roadblock’ for his work. He states that he often received substantial push back from government officials, making him feel targeted for engaging in investigatory journalism (Ide and Vashisht, 2006). Another investigative journalist, Max McCoy adds that this ‘brick wall’ was built right after the September 11th attacks, and gathering or being granted access to information and documents takes much longer or is outright impossible (Ide and Vashisht, 2006). The next chapter will analyse the strategies of the U.S. administration to influence conflict reporting, and will provide further insight into how these strategies contributed to U.S. journalists’ assertions that they were directly restricted by the U.S. administration from investigating stories thoroughly.

In interviews, both Housley and DiMaggio also draw connections between these shrinking investigatory teams and the overreliance on official sources, a key theme which was evident throughout Iraq War reporting, as demonstrated earlier in this chapter. DiMaggio (2016) asserts that the “overreliance on official sources has always existed but has gotten worse over time with the decline of investigatory journalism”. The decrease in investigation thus appears to have created an opportunity for the U.S. administration to generate its own propaganda through conflict reporting, as limited resources and teams were available to investigate assertions or seek information outside of these official sources. As considered by the propaganda model, the promotion of state propaganda in reports typically generates a one-sided narrative such as the one apparent in the Iraq War conflict reporting. Additionally, as theorised by agenda-setting theory, limited information which came from a narrow scope of sources and was not thoroughly investigated may have helped the U.S. administration to pursue its military agenda in Iraq. Therefore, in order to assess the politics of Iraq War conflict reporting, the decline in investigatory journalism is a significant issue for contextualising the structural factors which had an impact on this coverage.

The four factors discussed in this section in combination had a direct impact on Iraq War conflict reporting and in many ways were mutually reinforcing. For example, a decrease in investigatory journalism was apparent during Iraq War reporting, and was arguably discouraged further by the TV landscape, where the 24-hour news cycle created an expectation for journalists and outlets to report quickly and continuously, often at the cost of thorough investigation. The politicised and corporate ownership of the U.S. media may have also promoted this decline in investigatory journalism because journalists and media outlets had to consider and respond to the independent interests of their owners, and media outlets tended to be categorised or linked with a particular political party or affiliation, and therefore investigatory vigour may have been discouraged if it would have produced material which challenged these interests or political perspectives. The reverse is also evident, as the decline in investigatory focus and resources may have helped to perpetuate the politicised nature of the U.S. media. The U.S. corporate ownership and media landscape are also closely linked, as the U.S. media could pursue its business interests through a focus on entertaining coverage which may increase ratings or readership. Concurrently influencing and promoting each other, these four factors thus must be considered as structural elements of the U.S. media which played a role in the politics of Iraq War conflict reporting; following chapters will also explore the ways in which these structural factors provided a platform for the strategies of the U.S. administration and U.S. media to be employed more readily. The specific features of these structural factors and the connections between them have been discussed throughout this section and are summarised in Figure 5.2.

Conclusion

This chapter has built upon the preceding chapter, which assessed the conflict reporting of the Vietnam War and the Gulf War, and established that there was a significant shift, where reporting on the Iraq War manifested an unprecedented level of one-sided and uncritical coverage. Although the Gulf War generated news stories which

appeared one-sided, the Iraq War conflict reporting arguably reflected this issue more extensively than before. This chapter has first discussed the background of the Iraq War which highlighted the potential purposes and causes of the war. The next section assessed the content of pre-invasion period and Iraq War conflict reporting, revealing that the reporting was largely dramatised, established several inaccurate misperceptions, presented an 'us versus them' narrative, and heavily relied on official sources. These four features and themes contributed to generating the overarching theme of the coverage: that reports were overwhelmingly one-sided and supported the U.S. administration's initiatives and military agenda in Iraq with little critique or analysis. Finally, several structural factors which impacted on the Iraq War reporting were examined including the landscape of the U.S. media and impact of 24-hour televised coverage, corporate ownership of the U.S. media, the politicised nature of the U.S. media, and a decrease in investigatory journalism. The following chapters will consider the role of these structural factors in the Iraq War coverage, as well as the extent to which they provided a framework and platform for the strategies of the U.S. administration and U.S. media to be employed more readily.

This chapter has thus provided a context and background to the Iraq War on which the subsequent chapters can build, and this will help to address the research questions of this thesis. The next two chapters will explore the specific strategies of the U.S. administration and U.S. media, which will build an analysis of the politics of conflict reporting and impact of U.S. state-media relations, in order to provide insight into why the themes and features demonstrated in this chapter were prevalent. The next chapter will begin the examination of the impact of the U.S. state-media relationship by analysing the official and implicit strategies of the U.S. administration, which influenced the Iraq War conflict reporting themes illuminated in this chapter.

Chapter 6: U.S. Administration Strategies to Influence Iraq War Conflict Reporting

Introduction

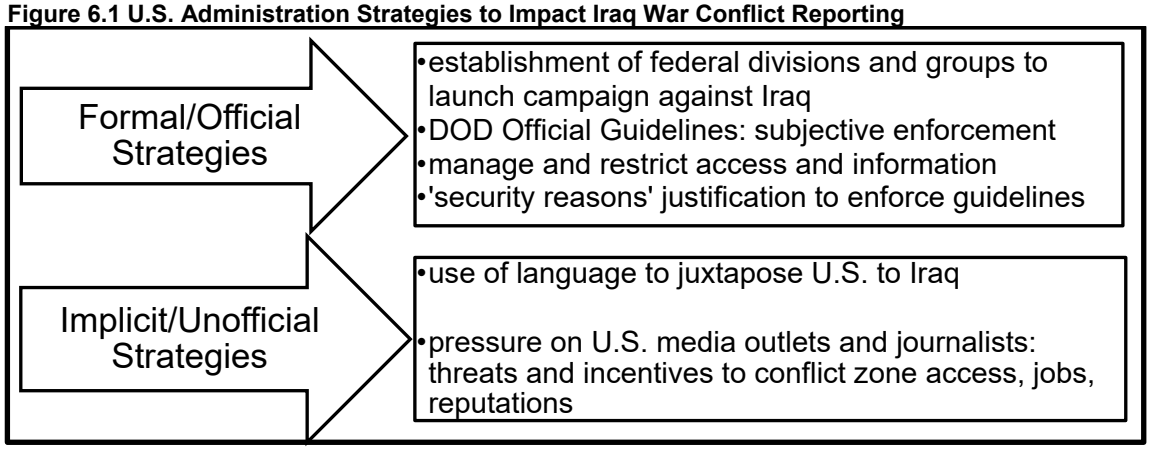
The primary purpose of this chapter is to establish the specific strategies of the U.S. administration which had an impact on the conflict reporting during the Iraq War, bringing forward themes of this coverage from the previous chapter. Both the official and formal strategies and unofficial and implicit strategies during the pre-invasion period and the Iraq War will be examined, in order to bring to light the range of strategies which sought to shape information, narratives, and news stories to serve the U.S. administration's interests and positively represent its agenda in Iraq. This chapter will thus address the first research sub-question of this thesis and argue that the U.S. administration was able to influence the Iraq War conflict reporting narratives through the employment of these official and unofficial strategies. This chapter will facilitate the analysis in Chapter 8, which will examine to what extent these official and implicit strategies, in conjunction with the media's strategies which will be outlined in the next chapter, played a role in the politics of conflict reporting, and ultimately consider how U.S. state-media relations shaped the Iraq War reporting.

As described in the Literature Review, the literature has pointed to a variety of strategies which can be utilised by states to influence conflict reporting. These strategies can be clearly differentiated, and can be categorised accordingly, in order to provide clarity about their nature and purpose. Thus 'official' and 'formal' refer to concrete strategies such as the establishment of new government agencies or official media guidelines. 'Unofficial' and 'implicit' denote the less tangible strategies such as introducing implied pressures on, or incentives for, journalists, to try to ensure their compliance in reporting or withholding certain information. Critical examinations of a U.S. DOD

document and official statements made by the U.S. administration in combination with interviews with a U.S. government representative and U.S. journalists will illuminate these strategies, by providing personal accounts, experiences, and inside perspectives on how these strategies were implemented in practice. Secondary research will also be utilised to provide supporting evidence of these strategies, as well as provide statistics and data that will illustrate how these strategies were employed.

This chapter will thus begin with an evaluation of the U.S. administration's official strategies by analysing the establishment of strategic government divisions during the pre-invasion period and the Iraq War. The key policies and ground rules within the official guidelines created by the U.S. administration and included in U.S. embedded journalists' contracts will then be examined. Then the U.S. administration's strategy to manage first access to conflict zones and official personnel, and then types of information during the Iraq War will be discussed. Finally, the use of 'security reasons' to validate potentially overly restrictive policies, a justification utilised throughout the U.S. administration's official strategies, will be highlighted. This chapter will then discuss the implicit strategies of the U.S. administration, such as the use of specific language and pressures on journalists through threats and incentives. These strategies are summarised below in Figure 6.1. Throughout this analysis, this chapter points to the ways in which the specific official and implicit strategies of the U.S. administration contributed to generating the Iraq War reporting themes highlighted in the previous chapter, and concludes with a section which discusses the overall implications of these strategies, as they were employed together.

Figure 6.1 U.S. Administration Strategies to Impact Iraq War Conflict Reporting



6.1 Official Strategies and Formal Regulations

6.1.1 Establishment of Government Divisions and Agencies during the Pre-Invasion Period and Iraq War

One of the first formal strategies employed by the U.S. administration was the establishment of new government divisions, with the primary task of managing the information in the conflict reporting during the pre-invasion period and Iraq War. This section thus begins to address the first research sub-question by highlighting one of the U.S. administration's strategies to influence conflict reporting, which was to create formal structures aimed at shaping a specific and particular message about Saddam Hussein, and also establishing a connection to the September 11th terrorist attacks, all aimed at underscoring the necessity of military action in response.

During the pre-invasion period, the Office of Strategic Influence (OSI) and Office of Global Communications (OGC) were founded to target foreign media, in addition to domestic outlets, and their focus was on launching a campaign against Saddam Hussein and positioning the United States as a just force and protectorate against Iraq (Snow and Taylor, 2006; Frank and Osgood, 2010; Miller and Sabir, 2012; Miller, Stauber and Rampton, 2004). These divisions were specifically designed to devote their efforts to establishing the message that Saddam Hussein was a threat, and to introduce the possibility of the existence of weapons of mass destruction (Miller and Sabir, 2012). The OGC alone spent $200 million in its campaign during the pre-invasion period towards this objective (Miller, Stauber and Rampton, 2004). Miller and Sabir (2012, p.80) assert that the OGC "faked and spun intelligence information" and set up the Office of Special Plans to "bypass the CIA, which was reluctant to go along with some of the lies". It is noteworthy that these Offices were founded in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks, carried out by a terrorist group without any established or known connections to Hussein. It thus appears that these Offices were strategically created with the goal of launching a new narrative to connect Hussein to the attacks, and to build the foundation upon which an

invasion would be deemed necessary. The establishment of these Offices therefore represents an initial strategy of the U.S. administration to influence the news coverage, through the focused efforts to shape a narrative that demonised Hussein.

Once the 2003 invasion of Iraq occurred, other new agencies and divisions were created by the U.S. administration that targeted both U.S. and Iraqi media. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was a division of the United States DOD established in Iraq, officially created to be an interim governing body in Baghdad, during the U.S. occupation. As a governing force in Iraq, funded and run by the U.S. government, the CPA shut down local news stations and print media outlets, and justified this act as a necessity, because, they claimed, these news sources produced stories which incited Iraqi detestation for the CPA and American military in Iraq, as a result of their anti-American messages (Al-Rawi, 2013; DiMaggio, 2010). DiMaggio (2010, p.120) similarly notes how the CPA discontinued Iraqi media outlets which produced “wild stories” about the American military, while simultaneously internally producing news stories which promoted U.S. efforts in Iraq and positively supported American policies and initiatives through the Iraqi Media Network (IMN), an American-run subset of the CPA. Al-Rawi (2013, p.384) adds that because the IMN was fully controlled by the CPA, former employees of the IMN have admitted that the station was “’an irrelevant mouthpiece for Coalition Provisional Authority propaganda’ due to its ‘managed news and mediocre programs’. The IMN’s original goal was to be ‘an informal conduit’; instead, it became ‘just rubber-stamp flacking for the C.P.A.’”.

Seeking to eliminate stories which reported unfavourably about the U.S. administration and concurrently internally published pro-American reports, it is very likely that these divisions influenced conflict reporting and contributed to generating the largely one-sided narrative highlighted in Chapter 5 as the principal theme of the coverage, and supporting features such as the inaccurate misperceptions and ‘us versus them’ narrative. Because these groups sought to establish a narrative that connected Hussein to the terrorist attacks, and promoted an eventual invasion, this U.S. administration strategy thus attempted to utilise purposefully chosen information, which as agenda-setting theory

explains, frames a narrative to set a specific agenda, in this case to support the agenda for military action in Iraq. The establishment of these new government offices and agencies thus created a platform for producing pro-American and anti-Hussein propaganda while concurrently setting its military agenda, laying the groundwork for the necessity of war, which the propaganda model theorises, can also generate and encourage this type of one-sided narrative. The next section will continue to highlight the U.S. administration's strategies by examining the official guidelines and rules for embedded journalists which were implemented by the U.S. government.

6.1.2 Official Guidelines for Embedded Journalists

Once the Iraq War began and U.S. journalists started applying for embed credentials in order to report from the conflict zone, the U.S. administration established the guidelines and regulations for foreign correspondents, and required every journalist to sign a contract that outlined the policies and 'ground rules' they must adhere to while in Iraq (Tumber and Palmer, 2004; Miller, 2004; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003). This section will closely examine this U.S. DOD document from February 2003 that formally and contractually bound embedded journalists to a set of rules, and highlight the key regulations which may have directly influenced the conflict reporting. The literature has also pointed to the significance and impact of these official guidelines, and asserts that the specific regulations imposed during the Iraq War were unparalleled in their capacity to directly affect the conflict reporting through restrictions on U.S. embedded journalists, which often appeared extreme (Ghosh, 2003; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Miller, 2004). Miller (2004, p.89) declares that embedded journalism governed by these official guidelines was "the greatest PR coup of the war. Dreamt up by the Pentagon and Donald Rumsfeld the 'embeds'...were almost completely controlled by the military. Embeds agreed to give up most of their autonomy in exchange for access to the fighting on military terms...Each embedded reporter had to sign a contract with the military - a significant departure from previous conflicts. They were also governed by a 50-point plan issued by

the Pentagon detailing what they could and could not report". While most of the guidelines and ground rules may not appear to be an explicit violation of the First Amendment's freedom of press rights, this section will highlight how vague wording created the opportunity for subjective and unregulated interpretation and enforcement of these rules.

Thus, this section will continue to address the first research sub-question by demonstrating how these guidelines were not simply a security measure, but rather a purposeful strategy of the U.S. administration designed to influence and shape the Iraq War conflict reporting, and it will also consider the impact on the specific key themes and features of this coverage. This strategy also appears to mutually reinforce the decline in focus on investigatory journalism, a structural factor highlighted in the previous chapter, as the official guidelines diminished U.S. reporters' capacity for investigation, and decreasing investigatory resources contributed to the extent these guidelines were widely enforceable, therefore directly impacting how these embedded journalists reported on the Iraq War.

The DOD's correspondent guidelines first outlined general policies, two of which are particularly significant in an attempt to understand how these guidelines directly impacted upon the Iraq War conflict reporting. Section 2.C.4 states that "unit commanders may impose temporary restrictions on electronic transmissions for operational security reasons. Media will seek approval to use electronic devises in a combat/hostile environment" (Department of Defense, 2003). Section 3.F. then asserts that "embedded media operate as part of their assigned unit. An escort may be assigned at the discretion of the unit commander" (Department of Defense, 2003). Both of these policies utilise vague, open-ended wording, which allows for subjective interpretation. These policies do not specifically define "operational security reasons" or the parameters or guidelines which justify requiring an escort, and therefore the interpretation and application of these policies were left completely to the discretion of the military personnel. The use of 'security reasons' as justification for limiting the media will be discussed at more length later in this chapter, as it was a significant theme throughout the Iraq War as the

justification for the discretionary, and in some instances extreme, enforcement of these policies. These two sections thus illustrate examples where an official guideline may not be written as overtly restricting, however because of the undefined wording and subjective enforcement, the interpretation of these policies could have been abused and result in severe restrictions on embedded journalists. The literature (Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Tumber and Palmer, 2004; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Ghosh, 2003) has also observed how the restrictions placed on U.S. journalists contributed to the largely one-sided Iraq War conflict reporting, in part as a result of this open-ended wording, giving U.S. officials the authority to interpret the implementation of these regulations in a way that considerably limited embedded journalists' ability to report openly. Thus the U.S. administration may have directly benefited from tight enforcement of these rules, which helped control the narrative and information being reported directly from the conflict zone, ultimately contributing to the main themes of the Iraq War reporting content discussed in Chapter 5.

Section 4 of the DOD correspondent guidelines outlines the 'ground rules' for embedded journalists, several of which are particularly noteworthy, and can be considered U.S. administration strategies which had a direct impact on the conflict reporting. Section 4.B permits "local ground rules", in addition to the formal ground rules of this document, to be enforced, and which would be coordinated by central command (CENTCOM) (Department of Defense, 2003). Therefore, while the embedded journalists signed a contract agreeing to adhere to the ground rules specifically outlined within this DOD document, they would not have necessarily known exactly what other local ground rules they may be subjected to by CENTCOM. These local ground rules were also established subjectively and gave this discretion to the U.S. military officers, thus creating the potential for abuse of power and regulations that severely impose upon the embedded journalists' ability to report openly. Similarly, section 4.E states that embargoes could be imposed to protect "operational security" (Department of Defense, 2003). Again, "operational security" is not defined and leaves significant opportunity for open-ended

interpretation and enforcement at the discretion of the U.S. officials, which in turn allowed for potential misuse of this rule and limitations on these journalists' freedom of press. Thus, the subjective enforcement of these 'ground rules' may have also contributed to the inaccurate misperceptions and a narrative which largely represented and supported the U.S. administration's initiatives and agenda, as seen in the Iraq War reporting themes highlighted in Chapter 5.

Section 4.F details the type and scope of information which U.S. embedded journalists were allowed to release. While much of this section highlights the journalistic freedoms which may be enjoyed by embedded journalists in Iraq, section 4.F.2 regulates and limits the capacity to which these journalists could discuss casualties. This section states that U.S. embeds could only release "approximate casualty figures" and only "within operational security limits, confirm unit casualties they have witnessed" (Department of Defense, 2003). This particular section directly regulated how U.S. reporters were permitted to describe casualties, and thus is a crucial ground rule to highlight in order to examine how these regulations influenced conflict reporting. Only allowing approximate numbers to be released, and limiting journalists to only report on casualties they have witnessed themselves, is a strategy by the U.S. administration that specifically targeted the narrative within conflict reporting, seemingly in order to diminish the perception of negative consequences of American military efforts in Iraq. Schechter (2003), DiMaggio (2010), and Thussu and Freedman (2012) similarly observe how these rules skewed the depiction of casualty reporting and inaccurately represented, and also played down, this negative consequence of the war. Purposefully managing how these casualty figures were reported thus appears to have been a significant factor which contributed to generating the frames of the Iraq War which often presented misleading or incomplete information about both military and civilian casualties, as demonstrated in Chapter 5. This document also states that violation of these ground rules would result in "immediate termination of the embed and removal" from the conflict zone (Department of Defense, 2003). Therefore U.S. journalists may have been largely motivated by their

business considerations to follow these ground rules and maintain access, a concern which will be explored further in the next chapter.

Section 4.G continues outlining the ground rules, by discussing information which could not be released. Section 4.G.1 states that the coverage describing the success of oppositional warfare could not be released, and section 4.G.17 declares that “information on effectiveness of enemy camouflage, cover, deception, targeting, direct and indirect fire, intelligence collection, or security measures” could also not be reported (Department of Defense, 2003). These sections essentially forbade U.S. journalists from reporting any American failures, or instances where the enemy may have had a successful mission, making neutral reporting challenging. Prohibiting embeds from discussing any facts pertaining to the success of the enemy’s efforts made it difficult for these reporters to discuss a circumstance where the U.S. may have not been successful, even if this may have been what actually occurred. Thus, these ground rules may have influenced the narrative of conflict reporting and contributed to the inaccurate depiction of the war, support for the U.S. administration, and the principal theme of one-sided stories. Again, the open-ended wording created the potential for U.S. officials to severely limit the scope of information, and in some cases, not allow for any reports to be released which detailed the effectiveness or success of the enemy. The potential for this abuse will be revisited later in this chapter through the examination of U.S. journalists’ specific experiences, and the implicit pressures placed upon them to follow this ground rule. Citing ‘security reasons’, which will also be further discussed later in this chapter, was also utilised to enforce this policy, and justify the discretionary decision that a certain description or information about the oppositional military could not be released.

Section 6 of the DOD document outlines the security guidelines for U.S. embedded journalists. Section 6.A.1 declares that “in instances where a unit commander or the designated representative determines that coverage of a story will involve exposure to sensitive information beyond the scope of what may be protected by pre-briefing or de-briefing, but coverage of which is in the best interests of the DOD, the commander may

offer access if the reporter agrees to a security review of their coverage. Agreement to security review in exchange for this type of access must be strictly voluntary and if the reporter does not agree then access may not be granted" (Department of Defense, 2003). This rule within the security guidelines reveals the U.S. administration strategy to directly control the information and footage which might otherwise have been published in news stories. Again, the enforcement of this rule was subjective and left to the discretion of the unit commander, without any explicit regulations or precise parameters for when security reviews should be employed. This security rule thus provided the legal grounds to ensure that potentially controversial coverage, which may have reflected poorly upon the American military initiatives, was never released in the news. This official guideline appears to be one of the more overtly controlling strategies of the U.S. administration designed to influence conflict reporting, and again was often justified by officials by citing 'security reasons'. Left to the unregulated judgment of a U.S. official, this rule created the opportunity to filter out any unflattering footage or facts, and present U.S. embeds with the choice to give up their access or give up their story. The literature (Tumber and Palmer, 2004; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; DiMaggio, 2010; Gore, 2007; Miller, 2004; Dover and Goodman, 2009) also suggests that the key themes of this coverage appear to have been influenced by this regulation because the power was in the hands of U.S. officials to decide how severely the legislation would be interpreted and to what extent stories would be censored.

These rules and regulations for embedded journalists thus begin to shed light on how the U.S. administration's official strategies helped to generate the various reporting themes and features explored in Chapter 5, as well as how unequal power relations between the U.S. administration and U.S. media during the Iraq War may have been established, a key issue which will be examined further in Chapter 8. The following two sections will discuss other U.S. administration official strategies: the management of access to conflict zones and capacity to gather and publish information. These examinations will illustrate how these strategies could be deployed by the U.S.

administration to a great extent because of the official guidelines and the vague, open-ended wording and policies that allowed for subjective interpretations, discussed in this section.

6.1.3 The Control of Access to Conflict Zones during the Iraq War

As a consequence of the vague wording and subjective application of the DOD official guidelines and ground rules, the control of access to conflict zones was often discretionary during the Iraq War. This section will thus demonstrate how the DOD official guidelines largely laid the groundwork and established a practice which allowed the U.S. administration to restrict U.S. embedded journalists' access, which limited these reporters to a narrow and specifically selected view of the conflict. It will consider how these regulations specifically contributed to establishing the key themes and features of the Iraq War coverage, because of the restrictive focus created by these limitations placed upon U.S. journalists' access.

The official guidelines firstly allowed the U.S. administration to choose where U.S. reporters would be stationed and which military units they would be assigned (Tumber and Palmer, 2004). This initially allowed the U.S. administration to place U.S. journalists in the location of its choosing, or prevent these reporters from entering certain zones of the conflict. Security policy 6.A.1 in the official guidelines explicitly states that if a military commander felt that a U.S. journalists' footage needed a security review, the journalist either had to volunteer for this review, and thus risk potentially being barred from reporting the story, or relinquish the privilege of his or her access as an embedded journalist. Because of the open-ended wording and subjectivity of application, this regulation could have been interpreted beyond the scope of just ensuring security protocol, and enforced more severely, to limit the range of reporting for a U.S. reporter. The effect of this restrictive action would be to contain their perspective of the war, in order to ensure that the journalist could not release unfavourable footage that negatively reflected upon the U.S. administration and its military initiatives. Richardson (2007) observes how in many

instances, U.S. reporters chose to have all footage and facts checked by their military officials before releasing the story, in order to ensure that they would not be in violation of this policy, indicating this strategy encouraged compliance and self-censorship. Badkhen (2016) also revealed in an interview that freelance reporters seldom gained access to the conflict zone, so it was mainly journalists from formal U.S. media outlets who gained access, and, that the larger and more prestigious the media outlet, the more security consultants and restrictions existed. By implementing particularly close scrutiny of the U.S. correspondents of these large media outlets, the U.S. administration could attempt to ensure that the narrative and information reaching the largest audiences would be controlled and managed through the restrictions to access imposed upon these reporters.

A specific example where the U.S. government was able to influence conflict reporting through the control of American journalists' access, took place during an air raid during the initial invasion, when embedded reporters were escorted into a warehouse where they were completely restricted from witnessing any of the raid or counter-strike by U.S. forces, including the significant injury to U.S. troops which occurred (Graber, 2003). This decision was justified by citing 'security reasons', a recurring theme which will be explored in more depth later in this chapter. Despite complaints to the DOD, this group of U.S. journalists continued to be restricted in similar capacities throughout the conflict, and often were unable to witness key military actions (Graber, 2003). These U.S. embedded reporters were thus required to rely on the debriefings with U.S. military officials to learn what happened during the strikes and were unable to offer any of their own observations. Therefore, the official guidelines appear to have provided a legal platform for the U.S. administration strategy to tightly regulate U.S. journalists' access. This strategy closely reflects some of the themes Chapter 5 has highlighted in the Iraq War coverage, such as the overreliance on official sources and establishment of inaccurate misperceptions, both of which appear to have been encouraged and promoted by the limited scope of access allowed to U.S. embedded reporters.

While the official guidelines and policies did not explicitly state that access could be restricted to ensure that the U.S. embedded journalists did not report any unfavourable or damaging information about American efforts in Iraq, the subjective and discretional enforcement of these official guidelines by officials were often interpreted in a manner that restricted journalists to a limited view and understanding of the war. Housley (2016) disclosed in an interview for this study that being embedded is a "double edged sword" because while you are able to access the conflict zone, you are confined to your one military group and therefore your access is limited to seeing the war from the perspective of the one group. Suzanne Goldenberg, who has been a Washington D.C. based journalist and foreign correspondent for *The Washington Post* and *The Guardian*, similarly recalled that embedded journalists in Iraq were "totally restricted" and expected to turn over phones, function out of a media centre, and have a military minder with them at all times (Goldenberg, 2016). Housley and Goldenberg provide empirical insight into the experience of Iraq War embedded reporters and assert that in order to keep the access they required to report from the front lines, they had to work with the officials. The literature (Richardson, 2007; Spencer, 2005; DiMaggio, 2010) also points to this trade-off that U.S. journalists engaged in, often submitting to a degree of restrictions in exchange for access, in order to be able to produce stories from the conflict zone.

However, even when complying with the DOD regulations and ground rules, both Housley and Goldenberg also expressed their difficulty in being limited to a specific area and being closely managed by military personnel. They both feel the scope of their reports and ability to have a wider context or understanding of the conflict was diminished because they could only report the small picture of the war they were exposed to, while also having to be mindful that in order to keep this access they may have to adjust their stories to be approved by their military unit leaders (Housley, 2016; Goldenberg, 2016). Consequently, this strategy appears to have contributed to generating some of the specific features and themes of the Iraq War coverage, such as the perpetuation of inaccurate misperceptions and overreliance on official sources, and ultimately

encouraged the principal theme of one-sided stories largely supportive of the U.S. administration's agenda and initiatives.

This connection between U.S. journalists' economic interests, and trade-offs which encourage compliance with the guidelines in exchange for access, will be explored further in the following chapter, but the ability of the U.S. administration to tightly manage access begins to indicate how the apparent unequal power relations in the U.S. state-media relationship during the Iraq War came to be generated. Limiting and binding U.S. reporters to access areas approved by the U.S. administration ensured that journalists would only be able to construct a perspective of the war based on these specifically allocated zones, which the official guidelines created a legal capacity to enforce. By doing so, the U.S. administration could exercise its influence and limit the narrative to one which would support its initiatives and in turn promote state propaganda, which, according to the propaganda model, generates the one-sided stories Chapter 5 has highlighted as the principal theme of this coverage. Limiting and purposefully shaping the scope of information through the control of access to conflict zones, as agenda-setting theory highlights, can create framed narratives which in turn help to set policy. Thus, these regulations to access permitted the U.S. state the power to restrict U.S. embedded journalists' range of perspectives, which promoted a narrative which would support its military and political agenda, at the expense of a completely accurate representation of the conflict. The next section will build upon this analysis by considering how the official guidelines not only contributed to limiting U.S. embedded journalists' physical access to the conflict zone, but also largely diminished their access to information.

6.1.4 The Restrictions and Regulations of Information during the Pre-Invasion Period and Iraq War

The management of information during the Iraq War was another significant strategy which largely emerged from the U.S. administration's official guidelines; the strategic regulation of information was also apparent during the pre-invasion period and

will be discussed at the end of this section. This assessment thus continues to address the first research question, which seeks to establish how this strategy influenced conflict reporting. Several authors (Thussu and Freedman, 2012; Gore, 2007; Connelly and Welch, 2010) declare that the strategy to restrict information was one of the most effective weapons for the U.S. administration to use in the context of conflict reporting. Considering the specific content and narratives of Iraq War reporting highlighted in Chapter 5, this section will illuminate how the U.S. administration strategy to regulate information specifically contributed to generating these themes. One of the structural factors also highlighted in the previous chapter, the decrease in focus and resources for investigatory journalism, also appears to be particularly relevant when demonstrating the capacity of the U.S. administration to influence conflict reporting through tight management of information.

The official guidelines and ground rules arguably created a platform for the U.S. administration to regulate and limit U.S. embedded journalists' access to, and ability to publish, certain information during the war. The extent to which U.S. reporters were restricted on the type of information they could gather or release would often vary depending on the subjective interpretation and discretion of officers, however these guidelines were written to be vague and open-ended which therefore impacted journalists' ability to obtain or publish certain information. Gore (2007) and Miller and Sabir (2012) in particular assert that the goal of the U.S. administration was to completely dominate the information being produced in the news with state propaganda, and embedding journalists with extensive regulations was one of the most effective strategies to manage this information which came from the conflict zone. For example, section 3.F, assigned military escorts, 4.B, the implementation of local ground rules, and 4.E, the establishment of embargos, were strategies that limited the ability of U.S. embedded journalists to access and collect information. Similarly, regulations such as section 2.C.4, temporarily restricting electronic transmission, 4.G, listing the information which cannot be released, and 6.A.1, subjecting journalists to choose between a security review and their access, were all

specific strategies which tightly regulated the type of information which could be released. These official guidelines and ground rules created a legal capacity for the U.S. administration to regulate the information American reporters collected and released, and in so doing, arguably contributed to shaping the conflict reporting to feature one-sided reporting which supported its own agenda and perpetuated controlled perceptions of the conflict by limiting the scope and type of information available.

Some of the official guidelines explicitly limited U.S. embedded journalists' ability to release certain information, and appear to have directly impacted the coverage by promoting publication of misleading or limited facts and stories. For example, Schechter (2003), DiMaggio (2010), and Thussu and Freedman (2012) specifically point to the rules about reporting casualties, such as section 4.F.2 which only allowed journalists to report approximate numbers of casualties they had witnessed, and argue that these distorted what was actually happening. This strategy is closely reflected in the misleading or incomplete stories which, as Chapter 5 has highlighted, tended to downplay the scope of civilian and military deaths. For example, "nowhere in the media was any mention made of the fact that armed resistance in Fallujah developed only after the US military opened fire on a crowd of civilians, killing 17 and injuring some 70 more in what was described as 'appropriate action' – perhaps because the 'collateral damage estimate was within permissible limits'" (Jamail, 2012, p.292). This highlights the capacity of the official guidelines to specifically affect the clarity of information in reports.

In an interview, Goldenberg also recounts her experience with press conferences during the Iraq War, which she describes as one of the main platforms for information gathering. However, because press conferences limited U.S. journalists to primarily obtain information from U.S. officials, Goldenberg was aware that she was only receiving one perspective of the conflict which might not have been entirely accurate or complete. Goldenberg (2016) recalls these briefings as being "totally fantastical about how the war was going and being won", and even when the officials would occasionally allow alternative sources in press conferences, they would typically still be connected to the

U.S. administration, such as a foreign minister who would continue to use the official jargon and reiterate the administration's narrative. The literature (Monahan, 2010; Schechter, 2003) also highlights how press conferences were a prime example of how the type, scope, and perspective of information was controlled during the Iraq War reporting, which often depicted an inaccurate representation of the war through government officials, who were the principal source of information and who would typically portray the U.S. initiatives and progress positively. This strategy to utilise press conferences to manage the available information during the Iraq War therefore can be considered a strategy which contributed to the one-sided news stories supporting the U.S. administration, the prominence of misperceptions, and the overreliance on official sources, significant themes of the coverage highlighted in Chapter 5.

Regulating the topics of stories published was another strategy utilised by the U.S. government to manage information and shape the narrative of the war, which positively reflected the U.S. military efforts in Iraq. Specifically, Goldenberg (2016) disclosed that during her time as an embedded journalist, her unit commanders often asked her to write "fluff stories [about the Iraqi people] that made everything look normal and everyone seem happy, but nothing was normal and [the Iraqi] people were scared". In her experience, Goldenberg found that the control of information for publication was quite extreme and she was not given the opportunity to collect information outside of the restrictive parameters established by the U.S. administration or have open access to alternative sources. Goldenberg believes neither the press conferences nor the types of stories she was asked to write accurately reflected what was happening in Iraq, but instead, the purpose of reporting this type of information was to construct a specific message that supported the U.S. administration's agenda and initiatives in Iraq. Schechter (2012, p.310) similarly reveals that for many U.S. TV outlets there was "pre-screening to ensure that all correspondent scripts were 'responsible'". This strategy to regulate and restrict the information and topics in news stories appears to closely reflect the themes and features of the Iraq War conflict reporting established in Chapter 5 including the overreliance on

official sources and perpetuation of misperceptions, such as the Iraqi people's welcoming of American involvement.

The U.S. administration also employed strategies to monitor and control information coming from domestic reporters, such as tightening policies for video footage and restricting the type of people who could be interviewed on air, with the purpose of keeping critics out of the news. For example, across many U.S. TV news stations, if pictures or video footage had been released from non-Western sources, the sound would either be muted or voiced over by the American anchors (Rutherford, 2004). By doing so, these stations were able to acknowledge the images from alternative sources, but could also control the perception of these images by adding commentary which would help mould the narrative in a way that positively reflected upon American military efforts in Iraq. However, it does appear that the U.S. administration primarily focused on how to regulate the information collection and release by embedded journalists in Iraq. Many U.S. journalists reporting domestically were reliant upon their foreign correspondents for information and updates about the conflict, and therefore their reports typically reflected the information gathered from the conflict zone by the U.S. embedded journalists. The U.S. administration strategy for managing information therefore seems to focus on these embedded journalists, who were the initial sources of information and who would publish their own stories as well as report back to their American-based outlets with updates. Therefore, by restricting and managing information available to and published by U.S. embedded journalists in Iraq, the information within domestic journalists' reports would also be regulated and limited, by extension.

Considering the one-sided narrative of Iraq War conflict reporting, the perpetuation of inaccurate misperceptions, the 'us versus them' narrative, and overreliance on official sources, demonstrated in Chapter 5 as the key features of the coverage, the U.S. administration's efforts to control and regulate information appears to have been a significant strategy which influenced and contributed to generating these themes. Restricting and narrowing the type and scope of information in news reports, as agenda-

setting theory suggests, can create frames which help to set agenda and policy. Therefore, utilising official strategies to limit or purposefully select information and legally authorise discretionary censorship or altering of news stories may have contributed to coverage which largely supported the U.S. administration's military and political agenda in Iraq. The U.S. administration's strategy to control and limit the scope of information thus appears to have promoted state propaganda which, the propaganda model suggests, in turn reinforces the one-sided stories which Chapter 5 highlighted as the overarching reporting theme during the Iraq War. As the impact of this strategy is apparent, and closely reflected in the themes of the Iraq War coverage, this strategy to regulate and restrict information begins to suggest that an unequal balance of power in U.S. state-media relations existed, and provides insight into how this imbalance was generated within this relationship.

In addition to using the official guidelines to employ this strategy during the war, it is important to highlight how the U.S. administration also sought to shape the pre-invasion period coverage by closely regulating information. Gore (2007, p.103) fervently believes that the intelligence and information used by the Bush administration to support its agenda to invade Iraq was an "unprecedented and sustained campaign of mass deception", and that the conflict reporting was directly impacted by this control and management of inaccurate information. Though Vice President Gore was not in the White House administration during the time of the Iraq War, he had served in the previous administration, and was both familiar with the executive office practices as well as continuing to be in communication with President Bush and his administration leaders. Vice President Gore disclosed in an interview for this study that he even personally met with an expert from Oakridge, where analysts had analysed the metal pipes found by inspectors in Iraq and which were portrayed by the Bush administration as a uranium enrichment system. In this meeting, the Oakridge analyst declared that there was absolutely no possibility that the pipes could have been part of creating a nuclear system, and any reasonable person who was interested in understanding the truth would have

had no difficulty in discerning these facts (Gore, 2016). Because at the time, the specificities of the pipe analysis were not made public, only Bush's administration knew the detailed information about the pipes, and by exaggerating the potential danger of these pipes to the U.S. media, the U.S. administration could construct a narrative that suggested Iraq was developing or already had nuclear weapons, and was thus an imminent threat to American security. This strategy to restrict and control information during the pre-invasion period is specifically reflected in the misperception about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, and indicates why the perpetuation of such misperception was an ongoing theme throughout this coverage, as illustrated in Chapter 5.

The literature (Mermin, 2004; Gore, 2007; Rutherford, 2004; DiMaggio, 2010) also supports this contention that strategically managing and shaping a message about the pipes directly impacted upon the conflict reporting and contributed to the misleading information in the pre-invasion coverage, in order to ultimately shape a narrative which would support the invasion of Iraq. Gore (2007, pp.119-120) declares that "the historic misjudgements that led to the tragedy of America's invasion of Iraq were all easily avoidable. The administration's arrogant control of information and the massive deception perpetuated on the American people in order to gain approval for a dishonest policy led to the worst strategic mistake in the history of the United States". The capacity for the U.S. administration to regulate and control the information during the pre-invasion period is specifically evident and reflected in Chapter 5 which highlights the principal theme in the pre-invasion period as a narrative which supported the U.S. administration and its initiative for military action in Iraq, and thus begins to point to the existence of unequal power relations in U.S. state-media relations. The following chapter which will analyse the U.S. media's business considerations will provide further insight into why this unequal balance manifested itself, and consider why the U.S. administration's control of information in news stories appeared to be so great, which in turn contributed to generating the themes and features such as the overreliance of official sources, the inaccurate misperceptions, and the 'us versus them' narrative. The next section will

discuss the U.S. administration's strategy of using 'security reasons' to justify potentially excessive censorship or restrictions, a theme which was present throughout the regulations to access and information, and to defend the often restrictive interpretations of the official guidelines.

6.1.5 Citing Broad "Security Reasons" to Justify Official Guidelines and Restrictions

The previous sections have noted how many of the formal strategies were justified by the U.S. administration by citing 'security reasons' in order to defend a limitation that may have seemed, from other perspectives, to have been exceedingly restrictive (Gore, 2007; Thussu and Freedman, 2003; Miller, 2004; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003). This chapter has also highlighted how vague wording of the official guidelines and ground rules left implementation of policies to the discretion of officials, and thus had the potential to be interpreted in a way that strictly restricted U.S. embedded journalists when these officials claimed that it was necessary to protect journalists' safety or operational security. The examination of this strategy therefore continues address the first research sub-question of this thesis, and will argue that citing 'security reasons' was a strategy which helped to justify and reinforce the other official strategies utilised by the U.S. administration to shape the Iraq War conflict reporting.

The literature has suggested that in the specific case of the Iraq War, this 'security issues' justification was predominantly utilised as a strategy by the U.S. administration to manage U.S. journalists' conflict zone access and the information which would be reported (Gore, 2007; Fahmy and Johnson, 2005; Miller, 2004; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003). Reflecting on his time reporting from Iraq, foreign correspondent Robert Fisk recalls his frustration at being prevented from entering certain areas of the conflict zone with his military unit because of "security reasons", and declares that "the last thing I think they are interested in is the protection of journalists" (Miller, 2004, p.218). Instead, this security claim appears to have been used primarily to justify limiting or restricting U.S.

journalists' access to information or the conflict zone, which in turn diminished their ability to provide a thorough account of the conflict. Fahmy and Johnson (2005, p.303) similarly observe that "officers were allowed to censor copy and restrict electronic transmissions for 'operational security,' which could be defined as whatever a field commander wanted to censor". This research illustrates how both U.S. journalists' safety and operational security were justifications utilised to defend more extreme restrictions to both physical access and access to obtain or publish certain information. The literature highlights how these restrictions were largely discretionary which in turn directly impacted U.S. journalists' ability to report beyond what was approved by the administration.

The empirical research conducted for this study provides in-depth insight into this strategy. Vice President Gore has observed in his experience, there are times during a conflict when releasing certain information or allowing reporters to capture footage from a particular location would jeopardise the security of the journalist, the military personnel, or the goal of a mission, and in these instances the U.S. administration is understandably justified in imposing precautionary restrictions. However, Vice President Gore also stresses that this justification can be easily abused and politicised in order to control the scope and type of information published in news reports. When this occurs, broadly citing security reasons "can easily tip over into a subversion of the First Amendment and a blinding of the American people, which is what happened in Iraq" (Gore, 2016). As an embedded journalist in several conflicts including Iraq, Goldenberg (2016), asserts that more restrictions have been imposed over time, which despite being justified as security issues, are really just a means to control the narrative. In her opinion, during the Iraq War the U.S. administration wanted certain stories with particular messages to be published, and the most effective way to ensure this was achieved was to tightly regulate journalists. Citing 'security reasons' to justify particularly restrictive policies was thus a strategy which was difficult for U.S. journalists to argue with or override, and provided a rationalisation for censoring or regulating these reporters' access to combat zones and information (Goldenberg, 2016). Lisnek (2016) agrees with this contention and believes that there

were “pieces of the puzzle where the media were being held hostage. The media wanted to report things and the ‘cops’ are saying please do not because you’re jeopardising safety or because they didn’t want to fuel speculations or a reaction”. While Vice President Gore, Goldenberg, and Lisnek emphasise that there are times when keeping information classified is a necessity, their unique experiences and perspectives have led them to assert that during the Iraq War the lines between a legitimate security threat and simply utilising this justification to control the narrative were often blurred.

This research has illustrated how both physical access to conflict zones and the ability to obtain or release certain information were subject to restrictions and were justified by claiming a security issue, therefore preventing U.S. journalists from either obtaining first-hand information or publishing findings. This strategy thus appears to have largely limited U.S. reporters’ capacity to cover the conflict to the parameters set by the White House, as the administration had the legal capacity to deny information or access they deemed a ‘security issue’, and were not obliged to give any further explanation or justification. The research also indicates that there was very little these journalists could do when ‘security reasons’ were given as an explanation for the withholding of information or access; reporters were unable to push back against the restrictions placed upon them when their already limited access to a conflict zone or information was identified as a security issue. The U.S. administration thus had the power to interpret these events and present them in a way that was favourable for their agenda and initiatives, even if this narrative was not necessarily entirely accurate or a complete account of the events. This strategy therefore points to the existence of unequal power relations in U.S. state-media relations during the Iraq War, and offers insight into how and why this imbalance was generated, as the power was with the U.S. administration to deny access to conflict zones and information, whereas journalists did not have the authority or capacity to challenge or appeal this protocol when it was claimed that these restrictions were imposed due to security issues.

The strategy to broadly utilise ‘security reasons’ to justify often extreme restrictions appears to closely reflect several of the themes apparent in the Iraq War coverage, including the principal theme of largely one-sided and often misleading coverage, the overreliance on official sources, and the reiteration of inaccurate misperceptions. Purposefully limiting information, as agenda-setting theory indicates, can create frames which help set a particular agenda, and using ‘security reasons’ to justify withholding information or access thus contributed to generating the one-sided narrative apparent in the Iraq War reporting which supported the U.S. administration’s agenda to pursue military action in Iraq. The propaganda model also suggests that this one-sided reporting is produced when state propaganda is embedded in reporting, and the capacity for the U.S. administration to tightly regulate the information and access permitted to U.S. journalists through this strategy appears to have supported the perpetuation of the state perspective and propaganda in the coverage.

Thussu and Freedman (2003; 2012) add that in addition to ‘security reasons’ being used to justify seemingly extreme restrictions placed upon U.S. embedded journalists, this strategy was also utilised to regulate the domestic media. Certain footage sent from the front lines would often be deemed too threatening to the security of the troops or military mission, and would thus be pulled from being published or aired. Similarly, the daily White House press briefings would at times be cut short or offer very little insight into the U.S. administration’s military initiatives or foreign policy, typically with journalists’ questions being unanswered due to ‘security reasons’ (Thussu and Freedman, 2003). This justification would again be cited when particular documents about the military actions or operations would be withheld from journalists. The Washington D.C. press were a crucial source during the Iraq War to obtain information from the White House Press Secretary about the Bush administration’s goals and initiatives for the military action and eventual reconstruction and withdrawal. Considering the largely one-sided narrative and inaccurate misperceptions throughout the Iraq War conflict reporting highlighted in Chapter 5, this U.S. administration strategy implemented on the domestic media thus appears to have

also directly contributed to shaping the conflict reporting in order to support its agenda and initiatives.

The next section will discuss the unofficial regulations and implicit strategies employed by the U.S. administration and will build upon the analysis of the formal strategies discussed above. The informal strategies were in many ways possible to implement because of the existence of the already well-established official and formal regulations, and combined with them to have a marked collective influence on the Iraq War conflict reporting.

6.2 Implicit Strategies and Unofficial Regulations

In addition to the official strategies and formal regulations, several unofficial regulations and implicit strategies were concurrently employed by the U.S. administration during the Iraq War. This section will build on the formal strategies considered above, to examine how these provided a platform and opportunity for several of the implicit strategies to be executed. This section will draw upon the Literature Review, which outlined the various types of implicit regulations which could be employed by the state in order to impact conflict reporting and provide specific examples to illuminate the particular unofficial strategies utilised by the U.S. administration during the Iraq War. This section will continue to address the first research sub-question of this thesis, by establishing how these implicit strategies were utilised to shape and manage the Iraq War conflict reporting. The capacity of the U.S. administration to implement several of these strategies will be closely tied to the business considerations of the U.S. media discussed in the next chapter, and therefore this section will continue to build an understanding of U.S. state-media relations and the politics of conflict reporting, by first analysing the U.S. administration's position in this relationship.

This section will first illustrate how the use of language was a strategy of the U.S. government to manage information and shape perspectives, by providing a discussion about the use of purposeful labels and word choices. Implicit pressures, including

incentives and threats, which the U.S. administration placed on the reporters will then be highlighted. The interviews conducted for this study as well as critical assessments of official statements made by members of the U.S. administration will be utilised to provide empirical insight into this perspective and to illuminate how these types of implicit strategies were implemented in practice.

6.2.1 Use of Language throughout the Pre-Invasion and Iraq War Reporting

The choice of language utilised by the U.S. government officials was a significant implicit strategy, which this section will argue was intentionally and carefully selected to contribute to shaping a narrative that would support military action in Iraq. As highlighted in the Literature Review, the selection of word choices can create vastly different perceptions and messages depending on the words or labels and their connotations, and these choices often have less to do with relaying information, but rather, language is purposefully utilised to focus perceptions on a particular message (Richardson, 2007; Steuter and Wills, 2010).

6.2.1.1 Strategic Use of Language during the Pre-Invasion Period

Specifically, during the pre-invasion period the U.S. administration officials repeatedly utilised the word ‘liberation’ in statements about potential military involvement, which implied that the U.S. would be assisting a nation in need, rather than using words such as ‘invasion’ or ‘occupation’ which may have suggested more aggressive and unwelcome military action (Snow and Taylor, 2006; Mermin, 2004). The choice of operation name itself, Operation Iraqi Freedom, similarly implies that the military involvement in Iraq was not conducted out of self-interest or an aggressive U.S. military strike, but rather the purpose was to ‘liberate’ or ‘free’ the Iraqi people. Additionally, in 12 out of 13 speeches between September 2002 and May 2003, President Bush referenced ‘terror’ and ‘Iraq’ in the same paragraph, 10 out of 13 speeches referencing them in the same sentence, and seven of these 13 speeches discussed ‘September 11th’ and ‘Iraq’ in the same paragraph,

four of which were in the same sentence (Gershkoff and Kushner, 2005). During January 2002 to May 2003, 17 out of 22 speeches referred to ‘weapons of mass destruction’, and the average number of references to ‘terrorism’ was 12.2 per speech (Gershkoff and Kushner, 2005). In a speech “in the fall of 2002, President Bush actually told the country, ’You cannot distinguish between al-Qaeda and Saddam’”, also claiming that al-Qaeda was “’trained and armed by Saddam’”, while “Vice President Cheney was repeating his claim that ’there is overwhelming evidence there was a connection between al-Qaeda and the Iraqi government’” (Gore, 2007, p.109). President Bush also declared that by invading Iraq he would be “taking ’the necessary actions against international terrorists and terrorist organizations, including those nations, organizations, or persons who planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001’" (Kull, Ramsay and Lewis, p.591).

Several researchers (Gore, 2007; Frank and Osgood, 2010; Gershkoff and Kushner, 2005; Altheide, 2006; Richardson, 2007) assert that this language utilised by the U.S. administration during the pre-invasion period was purposefully chosen to explicitly connect Hussein and Iraq with September 11th and al-Qaeda, and ultimately support its greater ‘war on terror’. By employing language which focused attention away from al-Qaeda and shifted the message to demonising Hussein, Gore (2007, pp.109-110) declares that this was not “an innocent and ignorant mistake by the White House. The president and vice president ignored clear warnings, well before the war began–from the Pentagon’s Defense Intelligence Agency and from the CIA, in classified reports given directly to the White House–that this claim was fake...this myth...was not an example of negligence...this can only be labelled as deception”. Frank and Osgood (2010) support this assertion and argue that the U.S. administration exploited the September 11th attacks as an opportunity to combat Hussein and utilised particular language and labels to establish a campaign again him and Iraq. The literature emphasises that the use of language and labels to link Hussein and Iraq with the September 11th attacks was a U.S. administration strategy that drew on the power of language, rather than utilising any

confirmed intelligence or evidence. Instead, the objective of this strategy was not to present verified facts, but rather to utilise specific language to establish a narrative that demonised Hussein and connected Iraq to terrorism, despite lack of proof, and to create a widespread belief that the ultimate invasion was thus justified (Gore, 2007; Richardson, 2007; Altheide, 2006; Gershkoff and Kushner, 2005).

The empirical research conducted for this study also suggests that the U.S. administration's employment of language was purposeful during this period, with the intention of pursuing its agenda to invade Iraq. Hutton (2016) believes that the U.S. administration purposefully chose language in order to sell policies, and because this was the rhetoric and quotes U.S. journalists were given to report upon, these labels and specific language were often widely repeated in news reports. Vice President Gore (2016) adds that the "Bush administration revivified the sense of threat and fear with reference to 'mushroom clouds' and 'atomic bombs' that might be hidden in Iraq and connected the 9/11 attack to the looming prospect of a nuclear terrorist attack on the U.S. ... it [was] difficult to completely dispel those fears especially if biggest megaphone by the executive branch was constantly revivifying those fears...one reason for their decision to use 9/11 as an excuse to invade Iraq was that they had decided early on to look for some strategy that would allow them to invade". Vice President Gore (2016) continued that while he "can't look inside the brains of Bush or Cheney, the evidence seems to be clear that they had multiple overlapping motives for lying to the American people about the basis for war, in spite of the fact that it was based on falsehoods". The empirical insights from Hutton and Vice President Gore thus highlight how this particular grouping of labels and connection between Hussein and September 11th was strategic with the intention of establishing Iraq as an imminent threat for U.S. security in order to justify military action. As a result, the employment of this specific language was a significant U.S. administration strategy with the objective of influencing conflict reporting by shaping a narrative that would justify the U.S. administration's agenda to invade Iraq.

This purposeful and intentional language utilised by the U.S. administration in these official statements and speeches is closely reflected and apparent in the pre-invasion reporting themes illuminated in Chapter 5, including all three of the inaccurate misperceptions and the 'us versus them' narrative which demonised Hussein and positioned Iraq juxtaposed to the U.S. Thus, the strategy to utilise deliberate language to build a narrative which would support an invasion is particularly relevant to consider as having a direct impact on the conflict reporting. As Vice President Gore (2016) explained in an interview, because this language was coming from the "megaphone" of the leaders of the U.S. administration, it made the claims within the conflict reporting believable, as they were repeated by a wide variety of U.S. media outlets as facts. Agenda-setting theory argues that framing, such as utilising this purposeful language to connect Hussein to terrorism, helps to set policy and shape reality, and thus perpetuating specific language and labels together in speeches can be considered a strategy which contributed to shaping a narrative during this pre-invasion period which justified the U.S. administration's agenda for military action. Widely published, the strategic language and labels utilised by U.S. officials supported and promoted the state's propaganda, which the propaganda model argues generates one-sided reporting, which as Chapter 5 demonstrated, was the principal theme of this coverage.

6.2.1.2 Strategic Use of Language during the Iraq War

The U.S. administration strategy to utilise purposeful and intentional language appears to have continued during the Iraq War. This strategy specifically sought to emphasise positive word connotations when discussing American troops, such as 'soldiers', but used negative labels such as 'rebels' or 'insurgents' to describe Iraqi resistance, creating an implicit understanding that the U.S. was on the side of 'good' fighting against the 'bad' (Steuter and Wills, 2010). Steuter and Wills (2010) provide an extensive list of articles which included this type of language, and describe how these news stories were typically quoting or referencing the rhetoric and statements made by

U.S. administration officials. The literature (Silverstone, 2007; Thussu and Freedman, 2003; Richardson, 2007) categorises these labels and language as a ‘rhetoric of evil’ which generated an ‘either or’ option where the only two considerations were to be either ‘with’ the U.S. in pursuing good and security, or ‘against’ U.S. initiatives in the ‘war on terror’. Steuter and Wills (2010) describe how in interviews, speeches, and press conferences, U.S. officials would utilise degrading rhetoric and metaphors when referring to the enemy, such as labelling them as sub-human, linking ‘terrorism’ to ‘cancer’ and ‘decay’, and using animal symbolism with references to hunting these ‘barbaric’ people. This specific language utilised in official statements and press conferences during the Iraq War appears to closely reflect the ‘us versus them’ narrative which perpetuated through the coverage, and thus this intentional use of language is particularly important to consider as a strategy which appears to have had a direct impact upon this theme within the Iraq War coverage.

Press conferences and speeches from the U.S. administration during the war also appear to have sought to continue to link Hussein and Iraq to terrorism and the September 11th attacks, in order to suggest that an imminent threat was posed. On 14 September 2003, Vice President Cheney declared that "'if we're successful in Iraq ... so that it's not a safe haven for terrorists, now we will have struck a major blow right at the heart of the base, if you will, the geographic base of the terrorists who have had us under assault now for many years, but most especially on 9/11'" (Kull, Ramsay and Lewis, 2003, p.591). At a press conference on 28 October 2003, President Bush added that "'the intelligence that said he [Saddam Hussein] had a weapon system was intelligence that had been used by a multinational agency, the U.N., to pass resolutions. It's been used by my predecessor to conduct bombing raids. It was intelligence gathered from a variety of sources that clearly said Saddam Hussein was a threat. And given the attacks of September the 11th - it was - you know, we needed to enforce U.N. resolution for the security of the world, and we did. We took action based upon good, solid intelligence. It was the right thing to do to make America more secure and the world more peaceful'"

(Kull, Ramsay and Lewis, 2003, p.592). Thus, even after the invasion, the U.S. administration continued to use purposeful language which created connections between Hussein and terrorism and suggested that Iraq was an imminent danger. It therefore appears that the use of this language may have contributed to perpetuating the inaccurate misperceptions throughout the Iraq War coverage by suggesting that Hussein was involved in the September 11th attacks and that Iraqi weapons of mass destruction had been found.

Several researchers (Altheide, 2006; Berenger, 2004; Steuter and Wills, 2010; de Landtsheer et al., 2014; Gore, 2007) argue that this language during the Iraq War was purposefully deceptive and a U.S. administration strategy which sought to establish a narrative designed to pursue its agenda and justify continued military action in Iraq. Kull, Ramsay and Lewis (2003, p.592) highlight how President Bush's language suggested "that the same intelligence that determined the United States' policy on war had been accepted as correct by the UN Security Council in its deliberations and that the September 11 attacks, a UN Security Council resolution, and the choice to invade Iraq all followed a logical progression". Steuter and Wills (2010, pp.152-153) assert that "this language has little to do with disseminating information...many of the classic techniques of propaganda have found an often unconscious but significant corollary in mainstream media's framing of the conflict. This framing uncritically replicated the model proposed by the Bush administration and...the September 11 attacks were depicted as initiating a retaliatory 'war on terror'". Gore (2007, p.39) adds that this language sought to establish a clear and recognisable distance between Americans and 'terrorist' nations, such as Iraq, by utilising vivid imagery that distorted reality with the objective of generating "a new fear of Iraq that was hugely disproportionate to the actual danger Iraq was capable of posing". Gore (2007) also reveals that at the time, intelligence officials warned the Bush administration that these claims and connections were not accurate, but these officials were ignored.

It therefore appears that the U.S. administration's strategic use of language during the conflict was focused on perpetuating particular labels and narratives, rather than providing factual or accurate evidence for the intelligence upon which they claimed to base their facts. Agenda-setting theory's principle that framing news can shape reality illuminates how the strategic use of labels influenced the perception of the threat and danger caused by Iraq. Repeated throughout the Iraq War coverage, this purposeful language thus contributed to establishing state propaganda and a narrative which supported its military agenda, which the propaganda model and agenda-setting theory assert result in one-sided narratives, such as the principal theme of the Iraq War coverage which largely supported the U.S. administration's agenda and initiatives. The next section will examine another unofficial strategy of the U.S. administration, the implicit pressures and regulations placed on U.S. media outlets and journalists, which also contributed to generating these Iraq War content themes.

6.2.2 Implicit Pressure on Media Outlets and Journalists

This section will first address the implicit pressures the U.S. administration directed at U.S. journalists during the pre-invasion period, and then highlight how these unofficial strategies also continued and expanded during the Iraq War. This section will argue that threats to reputations and jobs for U.S. journalists who challenged the U.S. administration's claims and agenda, in combination with incentives offered to reporters for compliance, were implicit strategies employed by the administration which influenced conflict reporting by pressuring journalists in order to control the information they would report. These unofficial strategies were in part possible as a consequence of the vague and open-ended DOD guidelines which allowed for subjective and discretionary application by U.S. officials, examined earlier this chapter, and which will be explored further throughout this discussion. This section will continue to address the first research sub-question by analysing how the specific unofficial regulations employed by the U.S. administration were contributing factors which impacted this conflict reporting.

6.2.2.1 Implicit Pressure on Journalists during the Pre-Invasion Period

As discussed in Chapter 5, the 'politics of fear' was a key phenomenon apparent during the pre-invasion period, and this section will first demonstrate how this climate created an opportunity for the U.S. administration to strategically impose pressure on U.S. journalists to appear patriotic (Altheide, 2006; Rutherford, 2004; Gore, 2007). From his experience, Vice President Gore (2016) provides empirical insight into this atmosphere and asserts that "in the presence of elevated fear…cohesion becomes more highly valued even at the expense of freely exchanged information which is the essence of a free press…and so [the 'politics of fear'] diminishes the flow of information that might uncover deceptions or vulnerabilities and stamp them out by creating a sense of nationalism that cannot afford challenges or questions". Elevated fear from an event such as the September 11th terrorist attacks can thus manifest as patriotism and the desire to appear united. Vice President Gore (2016) observes that elevated fear also increases the appeal of authoritarianism and desire for a sense of security that the danger is being dealt with and safety will be restored, therefore indicating how the U.S. administration built upon the 'politics of fear' in order to use this phenomenon to pressure journalists to maintain a narrative of patriotism.

The literature has also made this connection, and suggests that as a consequence of the intense and widespread fear sweeping across the nation in the aftermath of September 11th, basic questions were not asked of the U.S. administration officials, and instead U.S. journalists tended to simply regurgitate the information and rhetoric of press conferences and interviews in their reports (Altheide and Grimes, 2005; DiMaggio, 2010; Miller, 2004). The literature illustrates how the U.S. administration placed pressure on major U.S. media outlets to uphold their patriotic duty by presenting a united narrative, and not challenge or critique the administration's agenda and initiatives, because cohesion and unity moving forward from the terrorist attacks would be necessary in order to protect the country from evil and terror (Altheide and Grimes, 2005; DiMaggio, 2010;

Miller, 2004). U.S. journalists who did question the official assertions or narrative, such as the link between Iraq and September 11th or the existence of weapons of mass destruction, would be condemned as unpatriotic, traitors, or interfering with the commitment to pursue national security (DiMaggio, 2010; Miller, 2004; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006). As an invasion became more imminent, U.S. journalists with dissenting views or those who questioned the inconsistent evidence used to justify military action, often sparked accusations from the administration that these reporters supported terrorism (Gore, 2007). CBS anchorman Dan Rather thus indicates that a direct consequence of this implicit strategy was that it instilled fear which stifled U.S. journalists from asking government officials "the toughest of the tough questions" (Altheide and Grimes, 2005, p.629). Rather asserts that there was intense pressure to appear patriotic during his time reporting in the aftermath of September 11th, and he had a fear of being labelled unpatriotic or creating unrest or tension with U.S. administration officials (Altheide and Grimes, 2005). Chapter 5 has established how in the pre-invasion reporting, claims and assertions made by U.S. officials were largely unquestioned or unchallenged, and this unofficial strategy may have thus contributed to perpetuating this theme.

The empirical research for this study adds further insight into the employment of this implicit strategy. Goldenberg (2016) recalls from her experience reporting during this pre-invasion period that there was intense implicit pressure from U.S. administration officials to specifically establish a drive for a war in Iraq within reports. DiMaggio (2016) highlights how many years after the invasion, several U.S. journalists came forward and apologised for failing to ask the tough questions at the time, and claimed they felt it was in the interest of national unity to not criticise the President, as well as experiencing a fear of appearing unpatriotic. In order to protect their reputations, a business consideration explored in the next chapter, U.S. reporters often felt compelled to repeat and emphasise the patriotic rhetoric which aligned with the U.S. administration's objectives and narrative. Vice President Gore (2016) concludes that the "9/11 attack was devastatingly effective in its intended purpose to instil fear...and that fear clouded judgement and caused many [U.S.

reporters] to be timid in questioning what the President and his team were presenting…The press was intimidated". Therefore, it appears that this implicit strategy, to an extent made possible and reinforced by the 'politics of fear', contributed to generating an overreliance on official sources and promoting the inaccurate misperceptions, which Chapter 5 has established were key features of the pre-invasion coverage and which may have deterred U.S. journalists from questioning or contesting the official narrative as a result of this pressure.

Placing implicit pressure on U.S. reporters to appear patriotic and uphold the official narrative may have also helped to establish the state propaganda apparent in the pre-invasion stories, which the propaganda model argues can generate the one-sided stories Chapter 5 has highlighted as the principal theme of this coverage. Pressuring journalists to report specific information or perspectives may have also contributed to generating frames which supported the U.S. administration's initiatives, which as agenda-setting theory suggests, helps to set policy and establish an agenda, in this case supporting the U.S. administration's agenda for an invasion in Iraq. Therefore, this strategy also points to the existence of unequal power in U.S. state-media relations during this period and illustrates one way this balance shifted to the U.S. administration to largely influence the conflict reporting. The following chapter will provide further insight into this relationship and the apparent unbalance of power, by considering the extent to which the U.S. media's business considerations motivated journalists to comply with the U.S. administration's implicit regulations and pressures. In addition, this strategy appears to have mutually reinforced the decline in investigatory journalism, highlighted as a structural factor in the last chapter, as the pressure placed on journalists deterred them from investigation, and the diminished resources left reporters largely unequipped to investigate extensively.

6.2.2.2 Implicit Pressures on Journalists during the Iraq War

This section will demonstrate how unofficial regulations in the form of threats to jobs and job incentives were implicit pressures the U.S. administration placed on reporters

during the Iraq War and which therefore had an impact on the conflict reporting. Several specific instances where U.S. journalists' jobs were threatened or terminated as a result of challenging or critiquing the U.S. administration's claims or agenda illuminate how this implicit strategy infringed upon reporters' First Amendment freedom of the press right during the Iraq War. Rutherford (2004) explains how an NBC veteran reporter was fired when he suggested that the military agenda failed as a result of Iraqi resistance, and Fox News referred to this reporter as a traitor for making such claims. Gore (2007) describes how CNN journalist Christiane Amanpour disclosed that reporters were punished, either by being laid off or by restricting their access, if they questioned or critiqued the U.S. administration's military agenda or initiatives. Another CNN reporter also complained that the intense pressure and implicit threats to jobs from the Bush administration to align with its official narrative and agenda led to widespread self-censorship of journalists who felt they could not report freely or provide any commentary or critique that may have reflected negatively on the U.S. administration (Tumber and Palmer, 2004). Tumber and Palmer (2004) also explain how an NBC reporter was fired for stating that he believed the U.S. military had underestimated the Iraqi military capabilities, and the justification for firing him was that he was supporting opposition to the war.

The empirical research conducted for this study adds important and unique insight into the implementation of this implicit strategy during the Iraq War. Goldenberg (2016) describes how in her experience, although she was given access to the conflict zone, there was an unspoken expectation that U.S. embedded journalists would work with their military unit, and thus not report anything that might embarrass or negatively represent the operations. In an overt and more extreme example of censorship and infringement upon her First Amendment rights, Badkhen (2016) disclosed that she was kicked out of her embed in Baghdad because she wrote a story that did not positively represent her unit. When the decision to revoke her embedded status was made, her political officer in the unit asked her why she wrote the story, and she responded that she was just reporting what had actually happened. The story itself simply described a "hard day patrolling"

when the unit was attacked, which did not result in any major injuries or casualties, and then stumbled upon the aftermath of a bombing where a dying Iraqi man lay in the arms of his brother (Badkhen, 2016). Seeking clarity, Badkhen (2016) asked her unit officer if she had misinterpreted the incidents or if any of her facts were incorrect, and she was told that everything was correct, but the story was “too negative” and did not present American military involvement in Iraq positively. Badkhen (2016) recalls that “there was nothing positive about that day”, and although it was “a day full of blood and violence”, nothing she wrote was inaccurate or even went as far as directly challenging, critiquing, or questioning U.S. military initiatives, action, or agenda. However, because her story illuminated the destruction and inevitably negative consequences associated with the war, her embed status was terminated in order to eliminate further ‘negative’ stories.

This U.S. administration strategy to place implicit pressure and threats on U.S. journalists thus had the potential to directly impact both the information and the narrative within conflict reporting stories, as well as the types of stories which were published. Because reporters were significantly deterred from challenging or questioning the administration’s statements, initiatives, or agenda, this implicit strategy therefore appears to have contributed to producing the largely one-sided narrative which supported the administration’s agenda and which Chapter 5 has illustrated was the principal theme in Iraq War coverage. Thus, this unofficial strategy may have helped to generate propaganda in these news reports, as U.S. journalists felt intense pressure to positively represent the conflict and support the administration, and as the propaganda model indicates, state propaganda creates a singular perspective in reporting. The frames established as a result of this strategy also can be considered as a contributing factor which helped the U.S. administration continue its military initiatives in Iraq, as agenda-setting theory suggests that framing of information, particularly as this strategy generated frames which supported the administration, can create narratives which help set policy. The following chapter will consider how this unofficial strategy is also closely linked to the U.S. media’s economic interests, the apparent trend of compliance with this implicit

pressure, and instances where journalists challenged this unofficial strategy. This will support the discussion in Chapter 8, which will seek to provide insight into the politics of conflict reporting, U.S. state-media relations, and the subsequent impacts on conflict reporting.

To an extent, the employment of this strategy was possible because of the vague, open-ended official guidelines which allowed for a subjective and discretionary interpretation of these formal regulations, as illustrated earlier in this chapter. Many of these policies and ground rules for U.S. embedded journalists allowed officials to determine when security was at risk due to a particular story or footage, or when sensitive information needed to be kept confidential. Because there were no specific parameters or regulations set for when these restrictions should be enforced, U.S. officials had the power to impose censorship or restrictions at their discretion. As revealed particularly from experiences such the one Badkhen described in her interview, it is evident that U.S. officials had the capacity to interpret these official guidelines and ground rules as they saw fit, and to enforce limitations on U.S. journalists which may have directly violated their First Amendment right to freedom of the press. Despite this potential abuse, these official guidelines provided the legal justification for restricting or censoring journalists, and the policies' subjective interpretation and enforcement created a platform for the U.S. administration to unofficially regulate U.S. reporters by placing pressure or threats on their jobs. Thus this strategy continues to suggest that unequal power relations in this state-media relationship existed, and provides insight into how this imbalance was generated, which Chapter 8 will more explicitly highlight as a key discovery in this case study's analysis of the politics of U.S. conflict reporting.

In contrast, but in conjunction with the threats to jobs, another implicit strategy utilised by the U.S. administration to influence the conflict reporting was to offer incentives to U.S. journalists who did produce reports that aligned with and supported the administration's military agenda and initiatives. As highlighted earlier in this chapter, the administration's ability to manage reporters' access was an official strategy which in many

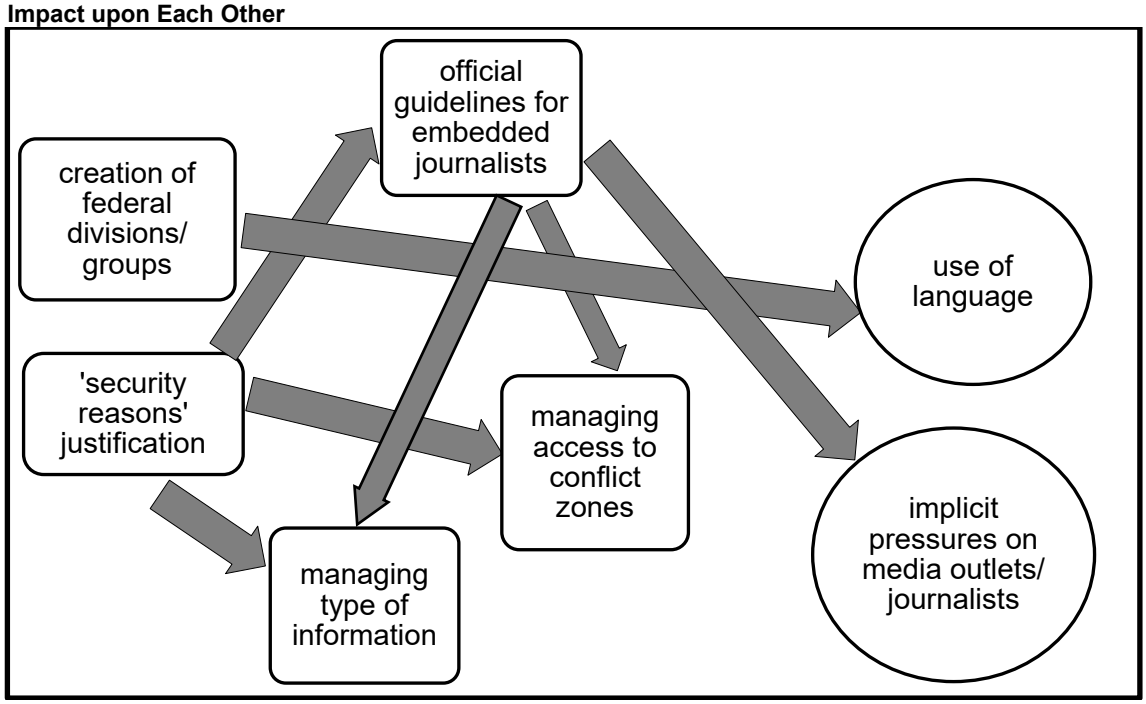
ways drew from the official guidelines and ground rules; however in an interview, Goldenberg reveals how the capacity to control access was also an implicit strategy utilised as a bargaining tool to incentivise U.S. journalists to report positively about the administration's military agenda and involvement in Iraq. Goldenberg (2016) disclosed that in many embedded journalists' cases, including her own, journalists were only given a 10 day visa at a time, so they had to "play ball" to keep getting the visa extended. Thus the incentives for favourable reporting may have had a direct impact on the conflict reporting because reporters had to take into consideration how they would be rewarded with access in exchange for publishing these positive stories. Chapter 7 will further explore this link between the U.S. administration's strategies and the U.S. media's economic interests, in order to provide insight into the politics of conflict reporting and the apparent unequal balance in this U.S. state-media relationship during the Iraq War.

Badkhen (2016) provides further empirical insight into this implicit strategy and reveals that as an embedded reporter she was pressured to report on "reconstruction in Iraq", despite this directly contradicting what she was observing. In the summer of 2003, Badkhen was reporting from a zone where bombings and shootings were happening regularly, however according to U.S. news reports, this was a region where reconstruction was supposedly taking place. Badkhen (2016) knew she was being asked to write about reconstruction because it was the "desirable story", and that publishing the stories she was being asked to write would allow her to continue to have access to these zones. Vice President Gore (2016) also asserts that the intimidation of U.S. journalists by the administration influenced the nature and effectiveness of the press to report openly. The literature makes similar observations and theorises that there may have been pressure on U.S. journalists by officials to write stories which would support the official military agenda, in addition to the implicit understanding that they would continue to be granted access as long as these stories were produced (Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2005; Tumber and Palmer, 2004; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; DiMaggio, 2010). This unofficial regulation thus impacted upon the conflict reporting by using access incentives to shape the information

and messages in news reports coming from the conflict zone, arguably contributing to the largely one-sided and uncritical narratives which supported the U.S. administration.

This section has built upon the examination of the official strategies by assessing the implicit strategies and unofficial regulations employed by the U.S. administration. This analysis has drawn connections between these official and unofficial strategies by pointing to how they often promoted or mutually reinforced each other, and these connections have been demonstrated in Figure 6.2 below. The following section will consider more widely how the U.S. administration's official and unofficial strategies contributed to generating the themes and features of the Iraq War conflict reporting. Thus, the next section will provide insight into the politics of conflict reporting by building an understanding of how U.S. state-media relations impacted the Iraq War coverage by considering the specific role of the U.S. administration and overall impact and implications of its strategies.

Figure 6.2 The U.S. Administration's Official and Unofficial Strategies and How They Connect and Impact upon Each Other



6.3 Considering the Implications of the U.S. Administration's Concurrent Employment of Official and Unofficial Strategies on Iraq War Conflict Reporting

The purpose of this section is to consider the specific implications of the U.S. administration's official and unofficial strategies as a whole, demonstrate how several strategies helped generate and encourage apparent unequal power relations in the U.S. state-media relationship, and also highlight how these strategies directly impacted upon the Iraq War conflict reporting. The focus of Chapter 8 will be to consider the role of U.S. state-media relations in the politics of Iraq War conflict reporting by theorising how the U.S. administration's strategies in conjunction with those of the U.S. media influenced this coverage and argue that this balance of power was unequal. Thus Chapter 8 will present a more in-depth critical analysis which will seek to provide insight into this relationship; however, this section will consider the impacts and significance specifically of the U.S. administration strategies which can be built on for the examination of the U.S. media's strategies and ultimately the assessment of U.S. state-media relations.

Throughout this chapter, the examination of the U.S. administration's strategies has indicated that during the Iraq War conflict reporting, unequal power relations between the U.S. administration and the U.S. media appear to have existed which permitted the U.S. administration the capability to largely control and shape the narrative of reports; this is also evident in the overarching reporting theme Chapter 5 highlighted as the one-sided coverage which widely supported the U.S. administration, despite often presenting misleading stories or inaccurate misperceptions. This thesis thus contends that the U.S. administration's capacity to employ the official and implicit guidelines and regulations concurrently contributed to generating this unequal balance of power because it allowed the U.S. administration to closely regulate and restrict the U.S. media in a way that would support and promote its initiatives and agenda, which is supported by findings from both the relevant literature and empirical research conducted for this study.

For example, during the pre-invasion period, Monahan (2010, p.144) observes that the U.S. administration ”craft[ed] the narrative through press conferences, official statements, and media appearances to facilitate the transformation of the grief and pain associated with [the September 11th] victimization into a desire for revenge and support for military action". Snow and Taylor (2006, p.390) add that the “dominance of censorship and propaganda, ...authoritarian values of secrecy, information control and silencing dissent would appear to take precedent over democracy, the First Amendment and a free press. The general trend since 9/11...has been away from openness and toward increasing government secrecy”. The literature thus supports the assertion that one of the most significant implications of these strategies was the capacity for them to shift the power to the U.S. administration, which provides insight into how the unequal balance of power was generated and how U.S. state-media relations promoted the themes and features apparent in the pre-invasion coverage which largely supported the U.S. administration.

Fahmy and Johnson (2005, p.303) specifically discuss the implications of embedded journalism during the Iraq War, and assert that “the rules for embedded reporting were not designed to provide maximum freedom to report the war, but to ensure that the military version of the war was the only one reported. Reporters were not allowed to travel independently, which meant they could rely on few sources other than the military. Interviews had to be on the record, which meant lower-level service people were less likely to criticize military procedures or operations”. Thus, Fahmy and Johnson (2005) suggest that the strategies of the U.S. administration collectively created a platform on which one-sided reporting would be inevitable, as a result of the limitations and restrictions these strategies promoted. Kull, Ramsay and Lewis (2003, p.597) add that President Bush’s “remarkable capabilities” to manipulate perspectives through the U.S. media was both clear and concerning, as it was evident during this conflict that the power to influence the coverage was predominantly with the U.S. administration.

The research conducted for this study adds empirical insight into the apparent existence of unequal power relations between the U.S. state and U.S. media during the Iraq War, as well as the impact of the administration's strategies to generate this imbalance. Christine Mai-Duc, a *Los Angeles Times* journalist, asserts that from her experience, the implications of the official and implicit strategies targeted at access were particularly significant in shifting the power to the U.S. administration because they "affect the way information is reported and what is withheld, and those relationships [between the government officials and media representatives] have to be carefully managed" (Mai-Duc, 2016). Sabrina Siddiqui, a Washington D.C. based journalist for *The Guardian* adds that "once upon a time the media was setting the terms of what is being discussed, but now politicians are masters of playing the media" (Siddiqui, 2017). These experiences and perceptions support the finding that unequal power relations were evident in U.S. state-media relations during the Iraq War, and also point to this as a significant and direct consequence of U.S. administration's strategies which shifted more power and influence to the state to directly impact the conflict reporting.

It thus appears these strategies and their capacity to shift the balance of power promoted the establishment of state propaganda in the conflict reporting, which the propaganda model argues leads to one-sided reporting, and which, it has been argued, was the principal theme of the Iraq War coverage. In turn, this propaganda and one-sided narrative helped set and support the U.S. administration's military and foreign policy agenda, which agenda-setting theory suggests is generated through purposeful framing and limiting of information, which has been demonstrated as a significant outcome of these official and unofficial strategies. The next chapter, which highlights the economic interests and strategies of the U.S. media, will be vital in providing further insight into this state-media relationship, a more well-rounded understanding of how this imbalance of power was generated, and consider the wider implications on the politics of U.S. conflict reporting. Many of these business considerations and strategies are closely connected to the U.S. administration's strategies discussed in this chapter, and will thus together

support the assessment in Chapter 8 which will focus on how U.S. state-media relations and these interests and strategies concurrently influenced the Iraq War conflict reporting. However, this chapter has first presented evidence from the U.S. administration perspective and considered how an unequal balance of power appears to have been a significant implication of the administration's strategies, with examples such as limitations to access, utilisation of the 'security reasons' justification, and the threats and incentives to U.S. journalists' jobs in exchange for access and information, which tended to place the power and control predominantly in the hands of the government officials.

Conclusion

This chapter has drawn from the broad structured categories of the Literature Review in order to highlight first the official strategies and then the unofficial strategies utilised specifically by the U.S. administration in the Iraq War case study. The first section explored the official strategies and formal regulations which sought to influence the conflict reporting, first describing the establishment of government divisions and groups whose objectives were to generate a narrative that supported an invasion of Iraq. Then the key policies and ground rules created by the U.S. administration and included as a part of U.S. embedded journalists' contracts were highlighted, as well as the vague wording and discretionary implementation of these guidelines which allowed officials to subjectively enforce these policies, thus pointing to the potential for abuse of power and censorship which could have infringed on journalists' freedom of press. The next two sections discussed how the implementation of the official guidelines created a platform for the U.S. administration to manage U.S. journalists' physical access to the conflict zone, as well as access to and capacity to publish information. This section concluded by describing how 'security reasons' were often cited to justify these official strategies and argued that this strategy was largely employed to control the gathering or release of information, rather than to protect security. The next section highlighted the unofficial regulations and implicit strategies, including the use of language which emphasised

intentional labels and word choices to build a case to that supported military action in Iraq, pressures on U.S. reporters to uphold their patriotic duty during the pre-invasion period, and incentives and threats to jobs during the Iraq War.

Taken as a whole, this chapter has argued that the U.S. administration's employment of these strategies collectively contributed to influencing and shaping the Iraq War conflict reporting, and that they were implemented with the objective of managing the narrative, controlling information, and generating coverage which would support its initiatives and agenda in Iraq. The extent to which these strategies served this purpose appear to be extensive, and there are clear and direct parallels which can be drawn between the strategies of the U.S. administration and the major themes and features of the Iraq War news reports illustrated in Chapter 5, such as the inaccurate misperceptions, the 'us versus them' narrative, the overreliance on official sources, and the overarching theme of one-sided reporting largely supportive of the U.S. administration's agenda and initiatives. Therefore, this chapter has also theorised that unequal power relations appeared to be evident during the Iraq War because in part because of the extent to which the U.S. administration was able to widely control and build these narratives. Examining the array of U.S. administration strategies in this chapter has provided the foundation for analysing how these strategies, in combination with the U.S. media's strategies described in the next chapter, shaped state-media relations and affected the Iraq War conflict reporting, as well as provided insight into why unequal power relations manifested as it did. Thus, this chapter has addressed the first research sub-question by establishing the U.S. administration's strategies, which will also be considered throughout the following chapters to analyse further the politics of conflict reporting and the extent to which U.S. state-media relations shaped the Iraq War conflict reporting.

Chapter 7: U.S. Media Interests and the Strategies Utilised to Impact Iraq War Conflict Reporting

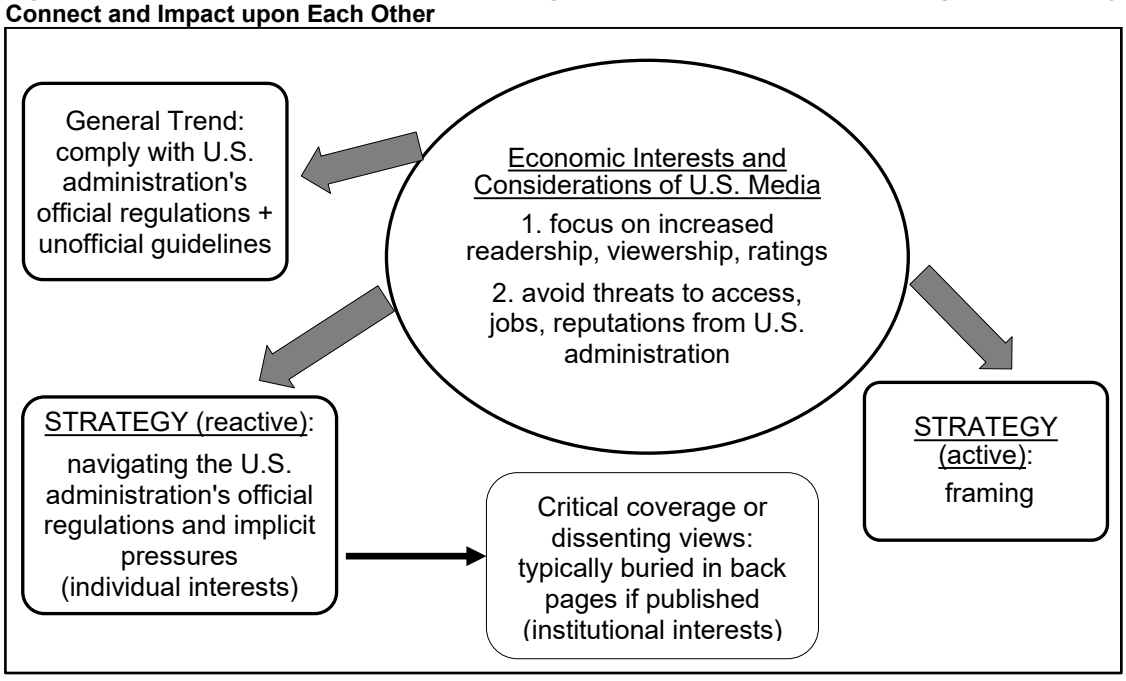
Introduction

This chapter will address the second research sub-question for this thesis, by assessing the U.S. media's strategies which sought to influence the Iraq War conflict reporting, as well as exploring the underlying economic interests of the U.S. media which largely drove these strategies. This analysis will draw from the experiences of both print and TV journalists who reported from the Iraq War, domestically as well as from embedded locations. Some of the experiences of the reporters, particularly those reporting from the U.S. in contrast to those reporting from Iraq, may have differed, however the perceptions of these reporters, as well as trends in the coverage across domestic and embedded journalists, as well as TV, online, and print, appear to have been similar. Therefore, as reasoned in the Methodology Chapter, this chapter can consider these types of reporting alongside each other, and by doing so, will seek to provide a thorough analysis of the collective U.S. media strategies during the Iraq War.

First, this chapter will outline the range of economic interests and business considerations of the U.S. media during the period of the Iraq War, and examine how these influenced the conflict reporting and largely drove the strategies which the U.S. media utilised to shape reporting. The differences between the institutional concerns of the outlets, such as increasing readership or ratings, and the individual considerations of journalists, such as protecting jobs and reputations, plus the interaction between these interests, will be highlighted. The following section will examine the trend for U.S. journalists to largely abide by the U.S. administration's official regulations, such as limitations to access, and implicit guidelines and pressures, such as threats to jobs or reputation for critiquing the official narrative. The section will illustrate how the economic

interests provided significant motivation for this compliance with the U.S. administration's regulations and restrictions. This chapter will then explore how the U.S. media reacted strategically to challenge this trend and attempted to resist these guidelines and restrictions. Specific examples from the Iraq War will be provided to demonstrate the consequences to the economic interests of those reporters who challenged these official or unofficial regulations. This examination will then assess the active strategy of framing by considering how framing was utilised to influence the Iraq War reporting, and will argue that the selection of specific frames for this coverage was also largely driven by the U.S. media's business considerations. This chapter will conclude with a section which will reveal how U.S. journalists and editors viewed their roles in this period of reporting, and their critical reflections on how the U.S. media performed during the Iraq War. This chapter will thus provide insight into the politics of conflict reporting by demonstrating how the U.S. media's interests and strategies shaped the relationship with the U.S. administration, impacted upon conflict reporting, and contributed to generating the apparent unequal balance of power in the U.S. state-media relationship. The main arguments in this chapter and the impacts and connections between the U.S. media's interests and strategies have been summarised below in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1 The U.S. Media's Interests and Strategies to Influence Conflict Reporting and How They Connect and Impact upon Each Other



7.1 Economic Interests and Business Consideration of the U.S. Media

In order for this chapter to critically examine the strategies of the U.S. media which impacted upon the Iraq War conflict reporting as a whole, this section must first highlight the specific economic interests and business considerations of the U.S. media. This section will demonstrate how these economic interests connected to and motivated both the trend of compliance with the U.S. administration's official guidelines and unofficial regulations, and the U.S. media's strategies for impacting conflict reporting. Therefore these business considerations are important factors to consider in examining the politics of conflict reporting and will be drawn upon throughout this chapter and the assessment of the U.S. media's strategies.

As several researchers (DiMaggio, 2017; Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010; Bahador, 2007; Reah, 1998; de Landtsheer et al., 2014; Richardson, 2007; Dorman, 2006; Spencer, 2005) have observed, the U.S. media is a business, and therefore while reporting factually and neutrally may be at the core of journalists' and media outlets' responsibility, the pursuit of financial success was also a significant priority and a consideration which drove the conflict reporting process during the Iraq War. Thus, the first subsection will point to institutional business considerations, such as the U.S. media outlets' focus on increasing audiences and ratings by capitalising on the 'entertainment factor'. The second subsection will highlight individual economic interests, such as U.S. journalists' need to avoid the threats to jobs, reputation, and access from the strategies of the U.S. administration. The final subsection will demonstrate how these economic interests in many ways drove the trend of complying with the U.S. administration's official regulations and implicit guidelines.

7.1.1 Focusing on Increased on Readership, Viewership, and Ratings

This section will first consider how the constant need for print media to sell newspapers, and for TV outlets to increase viewership and ratings, are key institutional business interests and considerations for U.S. media outlets which can have an impact on conflict reporting (DiMaggio, 2017; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010; Bahador, 2007; de Landtsheer et al., 2014; Richardson, 2007; Spencer, 2005). Allen et al. (1994) hypothesise that there is a 'spiral of silence', where individuals consuming news coverage 'self-censor' and choose to read or listen to a limited set of information and narratives which coincide with their own beliefs and perspectives, while disregarding alternative viewpoints. A 'spiral' occurs because media outlets are then incentivised to cater to these popular opinions and consider what their audiences want to see or hear, in order to ensure they continue to be successful as a business, by maintaining these audiences. Graber (1989, p.82) similarly notes that "if boring or controversial programs come on, a sizable part of the audience will defect to another station and remain tuned to it". Graber (1989, p.84) adds that "the criteria newspeople use in story selection relate to audience appeal rather than to the political significance of the story [or] its educational value". Farnen (2014, p.261) also asserts that "the main purpose of the media is not...to publish 'all the news that's fit to print', but rather just that news it takes to achieve high readership (or ratings in the case of radio and television)".

Geneva Overholser (2002, p.82) provides insight into this apparent spiral and observes from her time working for newspapers that "we [the U.S. press] are deflected from our driving purpose—to keep readers informed. Our newsrooms are marketing-driven and profit-oriented...we hate to be seen as unpatriotic. We fear making our readers unhappy". From his experience working for TV news outlets, Lawler (2017) provides empirical evidence in an interview which supports these assertions, and suggests that there are "multiple things at play about why certain narratives are perpetuated in certain media sources... but they are also responsive to viewership... You need to get ratings so there is a tendency to give [the audience] what they're looking for". Therefore, the research indicates that the U.S. media outlet's economic interest in considering how the

audience will react to a specific story, language, or image is a significant concern, and one which can directly shape conflict reporting by impacting on the information which is either presented or withheld.

Specifically during the Iraq War, U.S. TV outlets in particular appear to have capitalised on the 'entertainment factor' to pursue high ratings and viewership. Allen et al. (1994, p.283) have highlighted how televised coverage can enhance the 'spiral of silence', arguing that because "of its emphasis on simplification through quick, easy-to-digest video clips and soundbites, stereotyping, and repetition, [TV news coverage] is an ideal vehicle for the transmission of symbols capable of promoting the spiral of silence". Spencer (2005, p.10) asserts that focus on the 'entertainment factor' was a business consideration of U.S. TV media outlets during the Iraq War because "the main intention of television news is not to inform viewers, but to keep them excited enough to keep watching". Monahan (2010, p.3) similarly observes that because of "the increasing profit orientation of news organisations...the media are now governed first and foremost by an entertainment ethos and that this new news culture has virtually usurped traditional journalistic norms, thus abandoning the investigative and educational principles on which the industry was founded". Vice President Gore (2016) provides empirical insight and contends that from previous conflicts to the Iraq War the "culture of the press changed immeasurably, with the line between journalism and entertainment being eroded, especially in TV news where news programs became identified as contributors to corporate bottom line... With relatively less interest...in fearless truth-telling...network news programs began to pay attention to news ratings and the kinds of stories put on air and the impact of any story...with overnight ratings". Chapter 5 highlighted the close link between the 24-hour TV news cycle and the 'entertainment factor', and demonstrated how these structural factors impacted upon the themes in Iraq War coverage by largely prioritising entertaining or captivating footage and stories over depth or analysis within reports (Monahan, 2010; Hoskins, 2004; Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010; Miller, 2004; Connelly and Welch, 2010). Therefore the 24-hour TV coverage arguably provided a platform for the U.S. TV media outlets to pursue economic

interests through the ‘entertainment factor’, directly affecting the coverage, because of the focus on, and prioritisation of, exciting news, to increase viewership and ratings.

The institutional business consideration to increase viewership and ratings, and the decline in investigatory journalism, thus appear to be mutually reinforcing, as the substantial expense associated with maintaining investigatory teams deterred U.S. outlets from focusing on and funding these resources, and the ‘entertainment factor’ promoted increased audiences but often discouraged in-depth examination of stories. In addition, competition between U.S. outlets to break stories first or have the newest information did not encourage extensive investigation and analysis because of the need for speedy delivery. Instead, this competition to draw in audiences often contributed to the misinformation and misleading stories apparent during the Iraq War coverage (Cushion and Lewis, 2010; Richardson, 2007; Spencer, 2005; Thussu and Freeman, 2003). The emphasis on 24-hour news in particular generated an intense competition between U.S. media outlets to break a story first or present ground-breaking information, which may have caused rushed or limited fact-checking and discouraged deeper investigation into Iraq War stories before they were published (Richardson, 2007; Spencer, 2005; Cushion and Lewis, 2010; Thussu and Freedman, 2003; Monahan, 2010). Thus, Dorman (2006, p.20) concludes that during the Iraq War, the U.S. media’s “primary business interest was profit maximization—not the pursuit of the truth” and suggests that U.S. outlets were above all driven by this economic concern during the process of conflict reporting. Therefore, these economic interests and the decline in investigatory journalism appear to have reinforced each other, and arguably contributed to generating themes prevalent throughout the Iraq War coverage, such as inaccurate misperceptions and the dramatisation of stories.

The economic drive to increase readership or viewership and ratings will be highlighted as an institutional business consideration which both encouraged the trend of compliance with the U.S. administration’s strategies and which also largely drove the U.S. media’s strategies, particularly the selection of news frames, which will be discussed later

in this chapter. The next section will consider how the U.S. media's response to the U.S. administration's official restrictions and implicit guidelines was another economic interest.

7.1.2 Responding to State Restrictions in Order to Avoid Threats to Access, Jobs, and Reputation

Several of the U.S. administration's official regulations and implicit pressures discussed in Chapter 6 had the potential to impact on the U.S. media's business interests, and this section will argue that avoiding the consequences of these strategies was thus an economic interest for the media, predominately for individual journalists, but also for outlets. For example, limiting access to information or the physical conflict zone, creating uncertainty with threats to jobs, and attacking the reputation of U.S. journalists in response to critical coverage which challenged the official narrative, were all part of the U.S. government's official regulations and implicit guidelines, which restricted or placed pressure on journalists in order to shape and influence the Iraq War conflict reporting. Particularly taking into account the subjective interpretation and enforcement of the official guidelines emphasised in Chapter 6, this section will demonstrate how the U.S. media had to take into account how a certain story or perspective might be perceived by the U.S. administration, which ultimately had the authority to affect economic interests, such as by retracting access, or attempting to have an outlet discredited or a journalists fired.

First, Chapter 6 described the official guidelines for U.S. embedded journalists, which managed access to the conflict zone and to information, and illustrated how noncompliance with the regulations could result in retraction of this access. Maintaining access was essential for these reporters, and loss of this access would be a detrimental consequence to the business interests of the U.S. journalists and their outlets (Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Tumber and Palmer, 2004). Without physical access to the conflict zone, as well as access to the official military and administrative personnel, it would be challenging for these U.S. journalists to continue to obtain up-to-date information on the latest developments of the conflict, and therefore withdrawal of this access would have

made it difficult to provide continuous footage or news stories as they occurred. Therefore, protecting this access was crucial for the U.S. outlets to provide compelling and interesting reports, and for embedded reporters to compete with other journalists for the top stories and jobs.

An implicit pressure highlighted in Chapter 6 was the U.S. administration's ability to threaten U.S. journalists' jobs for failing to comply with the guidelines, as well as to incentivise those journalists who did abide by these restrictions. U.S. reporters' jobs could be directly threatened or terminated when they were perceived to be noncompliant with the official regulations or implicit guidelines, such as utilising alternative sources, or publishing dissenting viewpoints which challenged the U.S. administration's agenda or statements (Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Tumber and Palmer, 2004; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003). U.S. journalists' reputations could also be at stake depending on whether the U.S. administration perceived they were abiding by the official regulations and implicit guidelines or not. Several researchers (Altheide, 2006; Altheide and Grimes, 2005; Gore, 2007; Miller, 2004; DiMaggio, 2010; Rutherford, 2004; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Graber, 2003) describe the unwritten pressures placed upon U.S. journalists and outlets to appear patriotic, and argue the media may therefore have feared that providing alternative sources which challenged or critiqued the official narrative may have harmed their economic goals. As Chapter 6 illustrated, implicit threats to U.S. journalists, such as labelling them 'unpatriotic' or 'traitors' would have tarnished their reputations and therefore impacted upon the ability of these reporters to maintain jobs and the credibility and trust of audiences. Therefore, consideration of these economic interests may have also had an impact on conflict reporting, as U.S. journalists and outlets had to weigh up how publishing certain information might affect their reputations or job security, and thus may have motivated the media to closely align with the U.S. administration's narrative, which, as Chapter 5 demonstrated, was a key theme evident in this reporting.

The economic concerns and business interests of U.S. journalists also appear to have contributed to the overreliance on official sources, which Chapter 5 established as a

significant feature of the Iraq War coverage which promoted the largely one-sided news stories, ‘us versus them’ narrative, and inaccurate misperceptions which largely supported and encouraged the U.S. administration’s agenda and initiatives (DiMaggio, 2010; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Tumber and Palmer, 2004; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Brinson and Stohl, 2009). These researchers note that a part of the official guidelines for U.S. embedded reporters was to gather their information from press conferences and official government representatives, and therefore by complying with these regulations, the journalists could ensure they maintained access to the information provided by these officials, as well as to the conflict zone.

Additionally, the research observes that the American public tended to perceive official sources and information from political and military leaders to be the most credible and accurate, and therefore largely relying upon these official representatives for information could also enhance U.S. journalists’ and outlets’ reputations by ensuring their credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of the audience (Richardson, 2007; Hoskins and O’Loughlin, 2010; DiMaggio, 2010; 2017; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Laity, 2005; Mermin, 2004). In the documentary WMD: Weapons of Mass Deception (2004), reporter Jake Lynch claims that if “’you cease to base your news agenda on the words and deeds of official sources...and start to base it instead on gathering alternative perspectives, on gathering news from unconventional sources, then you will be somehow exposing yourself to the risk that you’ll be accused of bias’”. Therefore, utilising official sources supported U.S. reporters’ business considerations by staying in compliance with the official guidelines and securing their rights as embedded journalists, in addition to being perceived as credible sources of information because they were publishing information coming directly from government representatives. The overreliance on official sources throughout the Iraq War coverage, and the shift away from investigatory journalism, thus appear to have mutually reinforced each other and impacted the Iraq War conflict reporting, as relying on official sources did not promote investigation outside of this scope

of sources, and limited resources available for U.S. reporters made investigating claims and information from these sources challenging.

This section has provided an overview of the economic interests of the U.S. media during the Iraq War, and the analysis of the U.S. media's strategies later in this chapter will provide specific examples of U.S. journalists who did challenge these official guidelines and implicit pressures, drawing from this section in order to demonstrate the consequences on economic interests, as well as how these interests drove the strategy of framing. Before examining the U.S. media's strategies, the next section will first highlight the tendency for the U.S. media to comply with the U.S. administration's official regulations and implicit guidelines.

7.1.3 Examining the Trend for the U.S. Media to Comply with the U.S. Administration's Official Regulations and Unofficial Guidelines

Before discussing the U.S. journalists' strategies to resist the official regulations and implicit pressures placed upon them by the U.S. administration, this section will first address the general tendency of the U.S. media to abide by these restrictions and guidelines. This section will indicate how the institutional economic interests of U.S. outlets and the individual business considerations of journalists described in the previous sections largely drove this compliance. The section will thus continue to provide insight into how the apparent unequal power relations which existed between the U.S. administration and the U.S. media during the Iraq War were made manifest. The following section can then provide specific examples of the strategy for Iraq War journalists to challenge this apparent norm, and highlight how this had an effect on the conflict reporting as well as examine the consequences on business considerations that these U.S. journalists faced for noncompliance.

Chapter 5 highlighted the limited amount of Iraq War news stories which presented dissenting views or challenged the U.S. administration's narrative and how the Iraq War

coverage was largely saturated by official sources as the main sources of information, suggesting that the U.S. media tended to abide by the official and implicit regulations and restrictions placed upon them. In commenting on this, several researchers contend that the role of the U.S. media as 'watchdogs', to challenge, critique, and analyse the claims and agenda of the U.S. administration, is an idealistic notion. DiMaggio (2010, p.122) points to the U.S. media's "voluntary domesticity" during the Iraq War, noting that "reporters were overwhelmingly content to accept the Bush administration's statements about Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction". Schechter (2012) adds that the U.S. media were essentially "cheerleaders" for the U.S. administration during the Iraq War.

Al-Kindi (2004, p.340) specifically considers how the "system of embedded journalists and military news briefings as primary sources of news...forced news organizations to favourably slant coverage toward one side, rather than focusing on the events of the conflict and the war's consequence". Tumber and Palmer (2004) similarly assert that embedded journalism provided a formalised process which could be easily controlled by the U.S. administration by sanctioning a U.S. outlet if one of their journalists 'misbehaved'. As discussed in the previous section, capturing footage and reporting from the conflict zone not only gave U.S. journalists and outlets a sense of credibility, but also tended to produce entertaining coverage, which would increase audiences and ratings as well as help journalists compete for top stories; thus, protecting this access and embed status in order to pursue these economic interests was essential for U.S. outlets and journalists.

In addition, many U.S. outlets have come forward and admitted they kept information quiet or delayed publication of a story at the request of, or due to pressure from, the U.S. administration. One such example is the phone tapping scandal which occurred after the September 11th attacks, and which *The New York Times* acknowledged they knew about prior to publication, but confirmed that they were urged to sit on the story until after the 2004 elections, as it may have been harmful to President Bush's re-election campaign (Williams, 2006). Therefore, a general trend emerges that during the Iraq War, U.S. journalists and outlets did not challenge the official and implicit guidelines employed by

the U.S. administration. Instead, they appear to have been largely motivated to comply with these regulations, which encouraged them to maintain the official narrative and remain supportive of the U.S. administration's agenda and initiatives.

Some researchers and journalists have offered insight into why this trend appears to have occurred, and suggest that the economic interests and business considerations of the U.S. outlets and journalists largely drove compliance of the U.S. administration's official guidelines and implicit regulations and pressures. For example, the potential consequences on U.S. journalists' economic concerns, such as the retracting of access and threats to jobs and reputations, appear to have been deterrents for these reporters to challenge or defy the restrictions or pressure placed upon them. Journalist John McArthur declares that U.S. reporters saw "their role as following the party line and repeating or accurately reporting what the government is saying...they can't operate without being part of the system" (DiMaggio, 2010, p.124). Schechter (2012, p.310) concludes that "deception moved from the battleground to the media ground and drove its information component. With few journalists critiquing the blizzard of 'news' coming from official sources in an environment of intense competitive pressure, it is not surprising that the government view largely became the dominant view". These researchers indicate there is a connection which exists between the U.S. media's pursuit of its economic interests and the trend of compliance which generated the one-sided and often misleading reports in the Iraq War coverage.

Journalist Robert Fisk also observes that there appeared to be a consensus amongst the U.S. media that challenging the U.S. administration's agenda and initiatives would be both insensitive and unpatriotic (Miller, 2004). Tom Yellin, ABC documentary executive producer, argues that U.S. reporters considered it "bad journalism" and not "appropriate" to question or speak against the claims made by the U.S. administration (DiMaggio, 2010, p.122). CBS anchor Dan Rather also notes that the fear of having reputations attacked often deterred journalists from seeking out alternative information or viewpoints (Altheide and Grimes, 2005, p.629). Those U.S. media representatives who have admitted to

delaying stories when they were asked to by government officials, may have thus been driven by their own business interests, as they were aware that ignoring this request could result in repercussions to outlets' readership or ratings, and to individual journalists' access, jobs, or, reputations (Williams, 2006). This compliance on the part of the U.S. media, and the decrease in investigatory journalism, a key structural factor highlighted in Chapter 5, can thus also be considered as mutually reinforcing. Downsizing of investigatory teams and resources, combined with the competition to be the first journalist or outlet to break a story and the negative consequences for publishing critical perspectives, discouraged a focus on investigation. This reluctance or inability to widely challenge or combat the official guidelines and implicit regulations meant that the U.S. media would rely more heavily on official sources for information, a key theme of Iraq War coverage.

Overall, challenges and threats to the U.S. media's economic interests appear to have motivated the trend of the U.S. media to comply with the U.S administration's strategies, which in turn contributed to generating the predominant themes of the Iraq War coverage, such as one-sided reporting supportive of the U.S. administration, the perpetuation of inaccurate misperceptions, and the overreliance on official sources. The propaganda model points to the U.S. media's business considerations as one of the main causes of state propaganda in reporting, such as the institutional concern about increasing audiences and ratings and individual interests to preserve jobs, reputation, and access, which during the Iraq War appeared to encourage the media to largely comply with the U.S. administration's strategies. In this case, the state propaganda contributed to reinforcing one-sided reporting that supported the U.S. administration, and as agenda-setting theory makes clear, this type of singular perspective can help a state set its agenda. The U.S. media was conscious of its economic goals and the potential consequences of challenging or critiquing the official narrative; therefore compliance not only protected these interests, but also helped the U.S. administration perpetuate its propaganda through the media and set its political agenda for military action in Iraq, as

suggested by the narratives which justified the invasion and supported continued military action.

This trend thus supports the observation that apparent unequal power relations in the U.S. state-media relationship were evident during the Iraq War, and indicates that this unequal balance emerged in part as a result of the business interests of the U.S. media. Because these interests largely encouraged compliance with the U.S. administration's strategies, power was thus shifted to the U.S. administration, which in turn had a significant impact on conflict reporting. Williams (2004, pp. 199-200) summarises this exchange and observes that from his experience reporting during this period "the U.S. media, with rare exceptions, uncritically relayed government propaganda, but it was very unlikely that they would adopt adversarial or critical stances towards Bush's drive for war – they wanted political favours, and had been lobbying hard for them. If the media damaged the Bush administration politically, it in turn could damage the media commercially, and this wasn't something they were prepared to risk". This unequal balance of power and the extent to which the relationship between the U.S. administration and U.S. media was mutually beneficial in reinforcing the official narrative will be explicitly examined as key findings in the next chapter.

While it appears that the institutional and individual business considerations of the U.S. media motivated an apparent trend for compliance with the U.S. administration's official regulations and implicit guidelines, the next section will highlight some instances where journalists were not deterred by these potential threats to their economic interests, but instead directly challenged the restrictions placed upon them. The next section, which will explore the U.S. media's strategies for influencing conflict reporting during the Iraq War, will thus draw upon this analysis and demonstrate in what ways the U.S media's economic interests specifically related to or drove these strategies.

7.2 U.S. Media Strategies to Influence Iraq War Conflict Reporting

This section will first examine how U.S. journalists resisted and challenged the regulations and restrictions placed upon them by the U.S. administration. Specific examples will demonstrate instances of U.S. reporters who did not follow the trend of compliance and consider how these journalists were able to resist the official regulations, such as limits to access, as well as the implicit guidelines and pressures placed upon them, and the expectation that they would support the official narrative. This section will also highlight how strategically challenging the U.S. administration's regulations had an impact on the Iraq War conflict reporting, as well as looking at the consequences of noncompliance, which will indicate why U.S. journalists were widely motivated to comply with the official and unofficial guidelines. This section will finish with an examination of media framing as an active strategy. It will be argued that these media strategies were largely driven by the economic interests and business considerations discussed in the previous section, and will draw from that analysis in order to demonstrate specific examples of how these economic interests impacted upon the U.S. media strategies, and ultimately how these strategies influenced the Iraq War conflict reporting.

7.2.1 Resisting and Challenging the U.S. Administration's Official Regulations and Implicit Pressures

Despite the potential consequences on economic interests, some U.S. journalists found ways to resist and challenge the U.S. administration's official regulations and implicit guidelines and pressures, and thus impact the Iraq War conflict reporting. This section will highlight this reaction from the U.S. media during first the pre-invasion period, and then the Iraq War, and reveal how this strategy typically came from individual U.S. journalists, who often received push back or limitations from the institutional level in response.

7.2.1.1 Pre-Invasion Period

Some journalists at *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, Knight Ridder, *The Wall Street Journal*, and Newsweek published stories which questioned or challenged the

U.S. administration's statements, specifically about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, during the pre-invasion period (Kurtz, 2004; Farhi, 2013; Dadge, 2006). Even up until several days before the initial invasion of Iraq, *The Washington Post* reporter Walter Pincus published reports which questioned the validity and proof of the U.S. administration's assertion that Hussein had developed and was hiding weapons of mass destruction (Kurtz, 2004). Dana Milbank, *The Washington Post* White House correspondent in 2002, published a series of articles which looked closely at the lack of evidence to support the U.S. administration's assertion about the existence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and the gap between this claim and the reality of the capacity for Iraq to have been able to build nuclear weapons (Dadge, 2006). Therefore, by suggesting that the evidence provided by the U.S. administration may have been incomplete or inaccurate, these journalists illustrate specific examples and instances where reporters challenged the implicit pressures placed upon them by the U.S. administration, by disregarding the potential consequences for their own economic interests and publishing articles which challenged and critiqued the official narrative. These reporters were thus able to have some impact on this conflict reporting by presenting dissenting viewpoints that challenged the widely published official narrative, and by raising doubts about the U.S. administration's assertions.

However, these journalists have indicated that they did experience the repercussions which appear to have largely deterred U.S reporters from publishing critical narratives. In all of the cases mentioned above, none of the stories or series of reports were published on the front page or headline, and instead they were buried in back pages (Kurtz, 2004; Farhi, 2013; Dadge, 2006; Auletta, 2005). Pincus in particular received resistance from his *Washington Post* editors, who were concerned about backlash from the U.S. administration officials for challenging or critiquing their narrative and claims (Kurtz, 2004). Pincus's piece was ultimately approved for publication and received a small space on Page A17 only after he pushed extensively for approval (Kurtz, 2004). Meanwhile, *The Washington Post* "ran more than 140 front-page stories that focused heavily on

administration rhetoric against Iraq" from August 2002 until the start of the invasion in March 2003 (Kurtz, 2004, p.A01). So while some U.S. journalists did strategically challenge or resist the pressures placed upon them to align with the U.S. administration, the stories which made it to publication were not only rare, but also tended to be hidden behind headlines which supported the administration's agenda and statements. It also appears that this resistance and challenge was a strategy which largely came from individual journalists, who often received institutional push back from their outlets which sought to pursue their own economic interests by avoiding the potential backlash for releasing stories which challenged the official narrative, and this limited the capacity for these reports to be widely published.

In addition, these journalists were also subjected to attacks to their reputations as well as threats to their jobs for publishing such stories which questioned the intelligence or narrative being provided by the U.S. administration. These reporters often had their credibility attacked and were sometimes even harassed and called 'traitors' or 'unpatriotic' for failing to abide by the official narrative which supported an invasion in Iraq as a part of the larger 'war on terror' (Kurtz, 2004; Dadge, 2006; Auletta, 2005). *Washington Post* reporter Dana Priest recalls that "sceptical stories usually triggered hate mail 'questioning your patriotism and suggesting that you somehow be delivered into the hands of the terrorists'" (Kurtz, 2004, p.A01). Milbank in particular faced significant backlash, whose political editor at *The Washington Post*, Maralee Schwartz, was called by several senior Bush administration officials asking her to replace Milbank (Dadge, 2006; Auletta, 2005). An administration official also spoke out publicly against Milbank, attempting to attack his reputation and discredit his claims questioning the U.S. administration's intelligence and assertions about Iraq weapons of mass destruction. Milbank contends that after the publication of his articles, the U.S. administration sought to "'freeze' him out and refused to assist him in writing his articles" (Dadge, 2006, p.26).

Thus, the experiences of these journalists provide specific examples of the damaging impacts on U.S. journalists' economic interests, including access, reputation, and jobs,

which reporters largely sought to avoid. While these potential consequences on business considerations for challenging or critiquing the U.S. administration and its agenda and claims may have been a deterrent for most, some U.S. journalists disregarded these threats. Although many critical stories may have never been published, been buried in the back pages of newspapers, or resulted in significant negative repercussions to the business interests of the journalist, these reporters challenged the U.S. administration's implicit strategies and sought to influence the pre-invasion reporting by presenting a dissenting viewpoint, and challenging the trend to accept the official narrative without question and propagate the largely one-sided reporting during this period (Kurtz, 2004; Dadge, 2006; Auletta, 2005).

However, the general trend of the U.S. media during the pre-invasion period still appears to have been compliance with the U.S. administration's unofficial guidelines and pressures to support its initiatives and claims, largely motivated by business considerations and desire to avoid repercussions for noncompliance. The critical perspectives produced by some U.S. journalists were largely diverted and suppressed, and the predominant trend of compliance thus contributed to generating the largely one-sided stories during the pre-invasion period, which Chapter 5 demonstrated were widely supportive of the U.S. administration's intelligence claims and agenda. The propaganda model similarly suggests that state propaganda is driven by the U.S. media's economic interests and generates one-sided coverage. During the pre-invasion period, this appeared to occur in part as a result of business considerations which motivated the U.S. media to align with the U.S. administration, in conjunction with the ability of the U.S. administration to discredit or remove those journalists who did attempt to strategically challenge and resist the implicit guidelines by publishing critical narratives. In turn, as agenda-setting theory indicates, by limiting information and perspectives the U.S. administration could determine how to set its own agenda as a result of this trend of compliance and its capacity to silence dissenting perspectives. Thus the U.S. administration's narrative perpetuated widely throughout the coverage advanced and

drove its agenda for military action in Iraq, evidenced in several of the major themes Chapter 5 established in the pre-invasion coverage, such as the 'us versus them' narrative and inaccurate misperceptions. This section therefore points to an apparent existence of unequal power relations in the U.S. state-media relationship during the pre-invasion period, and provides insight into how this imbalance might have been generated by demonstrating how the U.S. administration appeared to have been effective in targeting the business interests of the U.S. journalists and outlets, encouraging compliance and applying repercussions for any perceived disobedience.

7.2.1.2 Iraq War

There are also several examples during the Iraq War reporting period where U.S. journalists disregarded the potential impacts on their economic interests and published conflict reporting which challenged or questioned the U.S. administration's agenda and narrative. In a similar way to the pre-invasion period, critical coverage resulted in detrimental consequences to journalists' economic interests, such as attacks on reputation, jobs, or access (Tumber and Palmer, 2004; Rutherford, 2004; Altheide and Grimes, 2005).

In domestic coverage, NBC reporter Peter Arnett asserted that the U.S. was not succeeding in subjugating Iraq as much as the U.S. administration claimed, largely due to the fact that U.S. officials underestimated the capabilities of the Iraqi forces (Tumber and Palmer, 2004; Rutherford, 2004). Specifically for Arnett, his statements resulted in immediate termination because his perspective was deemed to support those who opposed the war (Tumber and Palmer, 2004; Rutherford, 2004). It is noteworthy that Arnett lost his job not because his critical analysis was incorrect or unfounded, but rather because it directly challenged the official narrative and may have invited questions about the validity of the U.S. administration's assertions about the conflict. CNN anchor Christiane Amanpour recalls a similar experience and expressed complaints during the war that the U.S. administration was placing pressure on CNN to align with the official

narrative and withhold dissenting views, or face consequences which would harm economic interests, such as losing access or jobs (Tumber and Palmer, 2004). Especially considering the discrediting of journalists or termination of positions, the U.S. journalists who did publish or attempt to release critical stories may not have been able to gain traction, attention, or credibility. Therefore, these consequences for publishing narratives which challenged or contradicted the official narrative may have motivated the trend for U.S. journalists to comply with the U.S. administration's implicit guidelines and pressures, and ultimately contributed to the largely one-sided news stories which supported the administration's agenda and claims.

The interviews conducted for this research study also provide examples of U.S. embedded journalists who attempted to combat or resist specifically the official guidelines imposed by the U.S. administration, namely those which limited physical access to the conflict zone or access to information and alternative sources, as well as illuminate the consequences of this strategy. Goldenberg (2016) recounts her personal experience with challenging the access restrictions for embedded journalists and describes how she "ditched [her military] minder, hitchhiked and pretended to get [her] hair done in order to talk to people" in a relatively extreme attempt to influence the conflict reporting, by going outside the scope of access and information provided by the U.S. administration's guidelines. By doing so, Goldenberg could speak with a variety of other sources, including the Iraq civilians, and thus seek to obtain perspectives which were not represented in most of the U.S. media coverage, since the formal guidelines tended to limit U.S. journalists from gaining information outside of official sources. Therefore, resisting the formal guidelines which restricted embedded journalists' access by seeking out alternative viewpoints and sources to those provided in official contexts, is an example of a U.S. media strategy which directly influenced the conflict reporting by attempting to provide a broader array of perspectives outside of the official narrative. Mai-Duc (2016) argues that this was an important strategy for U.S. embedded journalists because "everyone has an angle...and it's the reporter's job to sift through this. Government entities and politicians

have their point of view and how they want to be portrayed, especially when you're dealing with particularly media-savvy political people... so sometimes you have to go to certain spokespeople to get information... [Embedded journalists] have to be cognizant that agencies want their perspectives to be heard and pressure is on the journalist to make sure you're getting the whole picture". Mai-Duc therefore points to the significance of this strategy and how these embedded reporters could have influenced the conflict reporting by challenging the restrictions to access and seeking information from alternative sources, which would then present an alternative narrative of the conflict other than the state's official one.

However, Goldenberg (2016) comments on the challenge for U.S. embedded journalists to implement this strategy and notes that while she had some success seeking out alternative sources and perspectives, "you couldn't get to the officials this way, you could only hear from them at official press conferences". As the previous chapter revealed, Anna Badkhen was eventually kicked out of her embed for publishing an 'unfavourable story', and therefore there were also severe consequences for embedded journalists who appeared to be unwilling to comply with the official and unofficial guidelines, thus illuminating the motivation for the widespread trend of compliance on the part of the U.S. media. Additionally, this chapter earlier discussed how official government sources tended to be perceived as the most credible and legitimate, and therefore U.S. journalists may have risked repercussions to their reputations or jobs for utilising sources outside of the official domain (Richardson, 2007; Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010; DiMaggio, 2010; 2017; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Laity, 2005; Mermin, 2004).

Lisnek (2016) provides further empirical evidence which highlights the difficulties for U.S. journalists who attempted to challenge restrictions to information access, by noting that if politicians had done something they knew was questionable or they felt that they were going to be harshly critiqued, they did not have to agree to do the interview, and "if they do agree [to be interviewed], they are usually able to control their message". Therefore, another challenge with this strategy of resisting the limitations to information

access during the Iraq War was the difficulty in finding government representatives who were willing to present alternative viewpoints or contest the intelligence, claims, and initiatives of the U.S. administration. In addition, even for those U.S. journalists who would ask tough questions or challenge the intelligence or claims being provided by the official representatives in press conferences or interviews, the spokespeople did not have to comment or answer these questions, and would often cite 'security reasons' in order to avoid answering questions or providing more information. This justification was highlighted in the previous chapter as a significant strategy of the U.S. administration to maintain control of the narrative by limiting the scope of information and largely tying the hands of U.S. reporters by making it difficult to obtain information which would challenge the official narrative or question claims made by the administration. Therefore, many U.S. embedded journalists may have felt the potential cost of harming their reputations or jeopardising their jobs and access privileges were too great, especially when typically they would not even be given the answers or information they sought.

Another strategy that U.S. journalists deployed to challenge the official guidelines and regulations was to report from Iraq unilaterally without formal affiliation, rather than as an official embedded journalist working for a mainstream outlet. Fahmy and Johnson (2005) argue that the reports produced by U.S. embedded versus freelance journalists appeared to be significantly different. "Embedded journalists described the war in terms of Iraqi weakness, the frequency of Iraqi desertion or surrender, and the joy of Iraqi citizens after the fall of the Hussein regime. Stories discussed friendly interactions between Allied soldiers and Iraqi civilians, but also characterized the tedium and fatigue of war. The war was generally described as an unparalleled success, with U.S. troops precisely targeting enemy targets. Unilateral journalists tended to be more negative, describing the possibility of important unconventional weapon counterattacks, the adequacy of Allied war planning, anger toward Americans for damage inflicted during the war, and mistrust of American intentions" (Fahmy and Johnson, 2005, p.304). Fahmy and Johnson (2005) discern that this discrepancy was a result of U.S. embedded journalists being closely managed and

given limited access, while unilateral reporters were able to gain a broader picture of the war because they were free to travel more extensively and speak with Iraqi military, officials, and civilians. Therefore, choosing to report unilaterally was a strategy that U.S. journalists could utilise to avoid the official guidelines and thus influence the Iraq War coverage by providing viewpoints from alternative sources who may have different perspectives than those being presented in the official narrative from Washington and from embedded journalists who were more restricted as a result of the regulations within their contracts.

However, there were several challenges and limitations for those reporting unilaterally which may have deterred U.S. journalists from so doing. First, these journalists were not granted the military protection that U.S. embedded journalists were entitled to, and therefore it was significantly more dangerous to report outside of the embed system (Fahmy and Johnson, 2005; Mermin, 2004). Unilateral reporters also would not typically have the credentials to access the military zones designated for embedded journalists only, and therefore these unilateral reporters may have not had the privilege to gain entry into U.S. military zones, or access to the military and government officials for interviews or participate in press conferences (Graber, 2003; Mermin, 2004). Freelance journalist Charles Hanley expressed frustration that reporting outside of the embedded system made it difficult to have stories taken seriously because the reports were not sanctioned by a formal U.S. media outlet and information did not come from official sources, an economic consideration also highlighted earlier in this chapter (Mermin, 2004). In 2003 Hanley wrote a story which revealed that Iraqi prisoners of war were being tortured in the American prison Abu Ghraib, and yet the report failed to gain any attention or traction and was easily discredited by U.S. administration officials since he was not formally tied to a mainstream news outlet and his sources came from outside U.S. state officials (Mermin, 2004). Hanley asserts that there was "'a very strong prejudice toward investing U.S. official statements with credibility while disregarding statements from almost any other source'" (Mermin, 2004, p.67). Thus the fact that the conflict reporting published outside of

the official embed system was largely discredited or ignored, provides insight into why the Iraq War reporting appeared largely one-sided and supportive of the U.S. administration's agenda and statements, despite the existence of these unilateral journalists who attempted to provide dissenting viewpoints and critical analyses. Jamail (2012, p.290) summarises the unilateral reporting experience by describing how he "had few contacts, no work space appointed with private guards, no protection, as [he] was going as an independent journalist, but above all [he] had no media outlet to write for". So while reporting unilaterally was a possible strategy for U.S. journalists to impact the Iraq War coverage by avoiding the restrictions in the official guidelines, business interests such as obtaining access and protecting reputations and credibility illuminate why U.S. reporters were predominantly motivated to agree to the terms and regulations of the embed system.

During the Iraq War coverage, the trend of compliance within the U.S. media thus appears to have been largely encouraged by the discrediting of unilateral journalists in combination with the action taken against U.S. embedded journalists' access, jobs, and reputations for challenging the official regulations to access or implicit guidelines to align with the U.S. administration. Consequently, the one-sided and often misleading stories, which Chapter 5 established as the principal theme of Iraq War coverage, perpetuated state propaganda, which the propaganda model also theorises is motivated by these economic interests of the U.S. media. Agenda-setting theory adds that a one-sided narrative and narrow scope of information help to set agenda, and thus this trend of compliance for U.S. journalists motivated by their business considerations may have contributed to generating this coverage which helped the U.S. administration continue its initiatives in Iraq. This analysis has demonstrated how the U.S. media's resistance and challenge to these U.S. administration strategies appears to have mostly come from the individual level, and often received institutional push back and limitations as a result of the outlet's specific economic interests and desire to avoid backlash from the administration. This examination thus continues to provide insight into how the unequal balance of power appears to have shifted more influence and control of the conflict reporting to the U.S.

administration. While this strategy appears to have often had detrimental consequences to the U.S. media's economic interests, the next section will illustrate how framing was a U.S. media strategy which may have assisted the media's business objectives.

7.2.2 Framing as a Strategy to Impact Conflict Reporting

This section will argue that the selection of the specific frames for news stories during first the pre-invasion and then the Iraq War coverage was an active strategy utilised by the U.S. media which influenced the conflict reporting and was largely driven by the pursuit of the media's economic interests. Several researchers (DiMaggio, 2017; Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010; Bahador, 2007; de Landtsheer et al., 2014; Richardson, 2007; Dorman, 2006) have argued that the U.S. media outlets and journalists operate with a need to make a profit and be a successful business, and the frames constructed during the Iraq War coverage were considerably influenced and shaped by the U.S. media's economic considerations discussed earlier in this chapter.

Monahan (2010, p. 20) summarises this link between framing and these business interests by describing how "news workers must identify news-worthy material, gather information, and organize it for presentation to an audience, all of which is challenging enough before considering the pressures created by deadlines, limits on broadcast time and print space, the profit goals of the company's executives and shareholders, and the expectations of the audience. In this context, news workers must rely heavily on frames as a means to quickly give shape and form to complex and unexpected events and to create a shared understanding between them and their audiences". Thus while the previous section demonstrated how the U.S. media's strategy to resist the official regulations and implicit guidelines and pressures placed upon them could have consequences on the privilege of access, reputation, and jobs, this section will demonstrate how framing was a strategy which worked to enhance and support the U.S. media's business considerations and goals. This section will therefore argue that the U.S.

media's strategic selection of frames directly shaped the Iraq War conflict reporting and was largely influenced by the media's various economic interests.

7.2.2.1 Pre-Invasion Period

During the pre-invasion period, framing was a strategy which, this section will argue, was largely motivated by institutional business considerations such as maintaining high levels of readership or viewership and ratings. The first section of this chapter demonstrated that U.S. outlets sought to achieve these goals by presenting narratives which were entertaining and also appealed to the readers' or viewers' sentiments and opinions. Chapter 5 highlighted how downplaying or critiquing the anti-war movement and focusing on patriotic stories of survivors of the attacks, fire-fighters, and the broader 'war on terror' were frames which presented the public with a narrative which suggested the nation was united and American leaders were providing security, protection, and a way forward from the September 11th attacks (Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; de Landtsheer et al., 2014; Kull, Ramsay and Lewis, 2003; Monahan, 2010; Gore, 2007; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Spencer, 2005; Rutherford, 2004; Hiebert, 2003). The framing during the pre-invasion period conflict reporting thus established an enemy and attempted to allay the doubt, fear, and panic of the American public by providing news stories which predominantly focused on a narrative of presenting a strong, united American front supporting U.S. military efforts against the threat of terrorism (Rutherford, 2004; Schechter, 2003; Mermin, 2004; Altheide and Grimes, 2005; Steuter and Wills, 2010).

These researchers assert that U.S. outlets strategically targeted the sentiments of the American people in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, in order to maintain audiences and rankings. Lewis (2012, p.258) describes how the pre-invasion reporting was primed to target the 'entertainment factor' because a "terrorist act is a veritable checklist of elements that feature on most definitions of news value: notably violence, conflict, drama, a threat to public safety and an ability to register on the political agenda" but which also resulted in a "series of narrative conventions that had little to do with any credible body of

evidence". Schechter (2012, p.312) similarly argues that this coverage was "a job of selling, not telling, became the job of pushing for ‘the home team'...it became clear that the reporting was structured on an 'AAU' basis- 'all about US' - with the focus on American television on Americans: our good intentions as liberators, our humanitarian methods". Therefore, this pre-invasion period framing can be considered a strategy by the U.S. outlets to pursue their economic interests by constructing entertaining and captivating coverage which would appeal to the audience, a strategy which also contributed to generating the key themes and features in this conflict reporting such as the largely one-sided narrative and dramatised reporting.

The pre-invasion framing was also arguably influenced by individual U.S. journalists’ economic interests in similar ways. Corera (2003, p.255) asserts that there was “pressure on journalists who are seen as unpatriotic for raising any criticisms [about government policy or the war itself]” from the U.S. administration “which is a very dangerous situation”. Rutherford (2004) adds that journalists were aware that being perceived or labelled by the U.S. administration as unpatriotic would have harmed their economic status. The last chapter highlighted how implicit pressures placed upon U.S. journalists to align with the official narrative was one U.S. administration strategy, and targeting the reputation of reporters, often labelling them as ‘unpatriotic’, was often the consequence of perceived noncompliance with this unofficial regulation. The literature (Altheide and Grimes, 2005; Miller, 2004; DiMaggio, 2010; 2017; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Richardson, 2007; Hoskins and O’Loughlin, 2010; Mermin, 2004; Laity, 2005) indicates that this implicit strategy could have impacted on both institutional and individual business considerations by highlighting how appearing unpatriotic may have had a negative effect on audiences, and presenting dissenting views outside of the official narrative could have hurt U.S. journalists’ credibility, as well as outlet’s readership, viewership, or ratings. Therefore, not only did this pre-invasion framing help the U.S. outlets appeal to audiences, but because these frames aligned with the U.S. administration’s narrative, framing also helped the U.S. journalists avoid the potential

negative consequences to jobs or reputations if they were to publish dissenting views critiquing the administration's agenda or perspective.

The business considerations of U.S. outlets and journalists thus appear to be particularly relevant in motivating the framing strategy during the pre-invasion period, with direct consequences to institutional and individual economic goals, if the U.S. media strayed from the united and patriotic narrative being presented by the U.S. administration. As a result, the U.S. administration was largely able to maintain its own narrative and propaganda across the coverage, which the propaganda model argues is often encouraged by the media's business considerations and in turn generates one-sided stories, such as those illustrated in the pre-invasion period conflict reporting narrative analysis in Chapter 5. Specifically establishing a frame which promoted American patriotism and unity while positioning the U.S. against Iraq also demonstrates how 'framing theory' can help set an agenda in conflict reporting, as this frame began to generate support for the U.S. administration's agenda to pursue military action in Iraq, as well as simultaneously supporting the U.S. media's various economic interests. The interaction between the U.S. administration's strategies to impact conflict reporting with its own narrative and the U.S. media strategy to frame stories in a way which supported its business objectives thus indicates how this relationship appears to be symbiotic and mutually beneficial, while at the same time illuminating apparent unequal power relations in U.S. state-media relations, providing insight into why the administration appeared to control the information and narratives more extensively during the pre-invasion period.

7.2.2.2 Iraq War

During the Iraq War, U.S. media outlets continued to strategically frame stories and information in a way which would appeal to the American people, and thus increase audiences and ratings, by focusing on the military triumphs, as they perceived the public did not want to see the less positive impacts of the war on civilians and the American military (DiMaggio, 2010; Dimitrova et al., 2005; Hoskins, 2004; Boettcher and Cobb,

2006). Chapter 5 highlighted how the Iraq War reporting largely underplayed civilian and American military casualties, which was a frame that considered the sensitivities of the American people and their desire to feel confident in U.S. security and the success of the military action in Iraq (Hoskins, 2004; Dimitrova et al., 2005; DiMaggio, 2010; Boettcher and Cobb, 2006). While protecting American sensitivities about seeing any suffering experienced by its own soldiers or people perceived as innocent civilians, the U.S. outlets did publish gruesome and graphic pictures of Hussein's dead sons, imagining that this would be more accepted or well-received by the public, as these images represented American strength, security, and victory (Hoskins, 2004). DiMaggio (2010, p.109) describes these strategic frames as necessary for the U.S. outlets to keep audiences and high ratings because what could not "be tolerated" by the American people was "portrayals of American foreign policy itself as fundamentally repressive, and systematically leading to the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians". Therefore, the U.S. outlets' strategy to show this largely 'sanitised' version of the war in order to appeal to what the American public wanted to see, and thus strive for goals such as high viewership and ratings, directly impacted the Iraq War conflict reporting by supporting a narrative that there were relatively few American military or Iraqi civilian casualties (Hoskins, 2004; Dimitrova et al., 2005; Boettcher and Cobb, 2006; DiMaggio, 2010).

In addition to these perceived institutional economic gains for outlets, individual U.S. journalists during the Iraq War appear to have also been motivated by their economic interests to strategically frame casualty statistics (Boettcher and Cobb, 2006; Hoskins, 2004; Schechter, 2012). Largely reliant upon official sources and press conferences for obtaining information, the U.S. journalists were discouraged from questioning the casualty information provided to them due to the potential consequences on reputations, credibility, or access. Earlier, this chapter detailed how the economic goals of the U.S. reporters could be harmed if a journalist attempted to question or discredit the U.S. administration's assertions or the official agenda, and therefore the U.S. journalists were incentivised by these business considerations when choosing Iraq War frames which downplayed

casualties. This framing strategy thus provides insight into the apparent unequal power in U.S. state-media relations during the Iraq War as reporters were not only largely reliant upon the U.S. administration for information and access, but there was the added threat of repercussions to their economic interests for framing coverage which challenged the official narrative or the administration's assertions, as well as incentives for frames which supported the official narrative.

When the U.S. media did cover American or civilian deaths, the stories were typically framed using specific language which would justify the action and therefore provide the American public with a rationalisation for these outcomes. As Chapter 5 highlighted, positive language was linked to the American military efforts, described as 'heroes', while negative labels, such as 'insurgents' was attributed to the Iraqi military action (Hoskins, 2004; DiMaggio, 2010; Steuter and Wills, 2010). By so doing, the U.S. media could assign blame to the opposition, while continuing to uphold the American use of force as necessary and noble, even when casualties resulted. Therefore this choice of language framed the casualty statistics in a way which would appeal to the American audience and thus support the institutional business considerations of the U.S. outlets by keeping its audiences engaged and satisfied with the presentation of the stories, as well as protecting individual journalists from the potential consequences to jobs or reputations for challenging the official narrative. This choice of frame appears to have directly influenced the Iraq War narratives, such as the perpetuation of an 'us versus them' narrative which positioned the U.S. against Iraq, and the downplaying of casualties, which were highlighted in Chapter 5 as key themes in this coverage.

The empirical research conducted for this study has also indicated that the 'entertainment factor' was another notable component of the strategy of framing, driven by the institutional interest to pursue high ratings and large audiences, and the individual interest to compete with other journalists to provide the most compelling stories. Chapter 5 highlighted how the 'entertainment factor' was a significant element of the Iraq War conflict reporting which focused on reports which were entertaining, rather than in-depth

or analytical in nature, and which also promoted a largely inaccurate or misleading perceptions of the conflict. Goldenberg (2016) provides an example from her experience and refers to the “famous moment where [the American military] took down the [Saddam Hussein] statue” and reveals that “there were statues of Saddam everywhere…this wasn’t a big one, not in a particularly important area, but this was published because it was by the hotel where all the journalists were staying... Lots of things that didn’t seem particularly noteworthy were moulded into defining moments of the war like the Saddam statue”. Goldenberg therefore demonstrates how this iconic footage was more opportunistic and superficial rather than having substantial political or military implications and significance. However, capturing this moment and framing it as a pivotal moment in the U.S. victory was a strategy which garnered a great amount of attention from the American public and thus helped U.S. outlets increase readership, audience, and ratings, and also elevated individual journalists’ reputations by supporting their competitive edge in breaking a story first and providing compelling coverage.

Hutton (2016) adds that he has observed how “journalists want to write interesting stories and there is the urge to exaggerate... there are examples of reporters sensationalising things and stretching the truth beyond the point of what it can bear because there are incentives to do this, [then] they go to the front of the paper, get responses and some news outlets don’t care very much if it’s right or not”. Largely driven by economic goals, this framing strategy to utilise the ‘entertainment factor’ thus appears to have directly contributed to generating the dramatisation, inaccurate misperceptions, and overall one-sided and often misleading coverage, illustrated in Chapter 5 as key themes apparent in the Iraq War conflict reporting, by encouraging reporting that prioritised sensational, stimulating stories and images, instead of in-depth analysis about the conflict. The next section will continue to build upon these insights by highlighting the reflections of U.S. journalists and editors looking back on this period of reporting. This section will consider how these media personnel perceived their role in the Iraq War

conflict reporting and their strategies of framing and challenging the U.S. administration's official regulations and implicit guidelines.

7.3 U.S. Media Personnel's Reflections on Iraq War Conflict Reporting

This chapter has highlighted how several strategies were utilised by the U.S. media to resist the official guidelines and implicit pressures imposed by the U.S. administration; however, the main trend was still for the U.S. media to largely abide by the official and unofficial regulations placed upon them. This section will present reflections of U.S. media outlet editors and journalists, and demonstrate how they remember this period as one with largely one-sided news stories as a result of this compliance, often driven by the economic interests and concerns highlighted in this chapter.

Many U.S. journalists who reported on this conflict confirm that collectively this coverage "in hindsight looks strikingly one-sided", supporting the data and analysis in Chapter 5 which highlighted this as the overarching theme of this coverage (Kurtz, 2004, p.A01). Fahmy and Johnson (2005) published a study which revealed that in a survey of 159 U.S. embedded journalists, 86% believed that the embedded journalists only published a "narrow slice" of the conflict, while only 33% believed that reports from embedded journalists were "thorough". *The Washington Post* editors believe that specifically in regards to the evidence which the U.S. administration claimed confirmed the existence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, they were "generally napping" along with the rest of the U.S. media and "gave readers little hint of the doubts that a number of intelligence analysts had about the administration's claims regarding Iraq's arsenal" (Kurtz, 2004, p.A01). Several major mainstream newspapers and TV outlets, including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and CNN, have issued apologies, taking responsibility for neglecting to publish more stories which questioned or challenged the official narrative. Executive Editor of *The Washington Post*, Leonard Downie Jr., has stated "'we were so focused on trying to figure out what the administration was doing that

we were not giving the same play to people who said it wouldn't be a good idea to go to war and were questioning the administration's rationale. Not enough of those stories were put on the front page. That was a mistake on my part'" (Kurtz, 2004, p.A01). Scott McClellan, former White House Press Secretary has even called the U.S. media "'compliant enablers'" (Schechter, 2012, p.310). Therefore it appears that upon reflection, U.S. media outlet editors and journalists were critical of their coverage of the Iraq War and believe that the conflict was reported in a manner that resulted in largely one-sided stories which tended to support the U.S. administration's agenda and assertions without challenge or critique, and thus did not always closely examine or accurately represent the conflict.

Several journalists have reflected on the various factors which they believe contributed to the production of this one-sided reporting, including the pressure to self-censor. *Washington Post* editor Bob Woodward has considered how U.S. journalists tended to be a part of "groupthink" and that he "'blame[s] [him]self mightily for not pushing harder'" (Kurtz, 2004, p.A01). While Woodward acknowledged that *The Washington Post* had information which contradicted the U.S. administration's claims of evidence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, reporters 'self-censored' and editors would seldom publish this viewpoint or would hide it in the back pages when journalists did write critical stories (Kurtz, 2004). *New York Times* columnist Leslie H. Gelb adds that "'only episodically did our best news outlets provide the necessary alternative information…ask the needed questions…or present insightful analysis about Iraq itself'" (Farhi, 2013). *The New York Times* editors acknowledged that "information that was controversial then, and seems questionable now, was insufficiently qualified or allowed to stand unchallenged. Looking back, we wish we had been more aggressive in re-examining the claims as new evidence emerged -- or failed to emerge" (Editors' letter, 2004). Self-censorship on the part of U.S. journalists and editors appears to have occurred widely throughout this coverage, and contributed to the trend of the U.S. media to largely comply with both the U.S. administration's official guidelines, such as abiding by the rules for conflict zone access

and obtaining information from officials, and the implicit regulations, such as the expectation that the U.S. media would not challenge or question the official narrative and agenda in Washington.

Several of these U.S. media representatives have attributed this self-censorship to a response to the economic interests of individual U.S. journalists, discussed earlier in this chapter, such as the implicit regulation and pressure from the U.S. administration to remain uncritical of the official narrative and agenda. CNN journalist Christine Amanpour believes that the “press was muzzled and [she thinks] the press self-muzzled… [because U.S. reporters were] intimidated by the administration” during the Iraq War, as a result of the official regulations in combination with the implicit pressures and threats being placed upon these journalists (Gore, 2007, p.126). NBC reporters also expressed pressure from the Bush administration to support official claims which contributed to the decision of many to self-censor, especially considering Arnett’s termination for suggesting that “the US army had underestimated the fighting capacity of the Iraqi military” (Tumber and Palmer, 2004, p.6). Therefore, this self-censorship appears to have been motivated in part by the U.S. administration’s authority and capacity to retract access or attack the reputations and jobs of U.S. journalists for producing critical reports which may have challenged the administration’s narrative or agenda.

In addition, these media representatives indicate that U.S. outlets were also encouraged to self-censor to pursue the institutional interests of appealing to audiences and obtaining high readership or ratings. Specifically, *The New York Times* editors admit that “editors at several levels who should have been challenging reporters and pressing for more skepticism were perhaps too intent on rushing scoops into the paper. Accounts of Iraqi defectors were not always weighed against their strong desire to have Saddam Hussein ousted. Articles based on dire claims about Iraq tended to get prominent display, while follow-up articles that called the original ones into question were sometimes buried. In some cases, there was no follow-up at all” (Editors’ letter, 2004). Schechter (2012, pp.308-309) adds that "the war became more of a spectacle, as part of an around-the-

clock global media marathon...that distorted the truth...It was more than traditional censorship...[it was] calculated deception...reports reflected a repetition of the official narrative...Its real goal was building their brand while raising revenues and ratings by turning war into an audience-attracting form of programming, sacrificing truth in the service of a false sense of duty and patriotic correctness...bound by a consensus view that not only missed the story but also distorted it". Therefore, the reflections of these U.S. media personnel suggest that self-censorship appears to have also been motivated by the institutional business interests of the outlets and editors, who had to consider how their audiences would perceive coverage which was critical of the U.S. administration's agenda or challenged their claims, because negative reactions could harm readership, viewership, and ratings.

While most U.S. journalists interviewed for this study, as well as several others highlighted in the existing literature, expressed feeling some degree of restriction by the U.S. administration's official and unofficial regulations, there is one noteworthy outlier who largely believes that combating or challenging these restrictions was not necessary because they did not prohibit journalists' from reporting openly or effectively. Adam Housley (2016), reporting for Fox News, declares that he "felt he could report freely from Iraq" and that he was not afraid to report what he saw. Housley (2016) believes that the restrictions to access were solely for security purposes, adding that this "exchange for access is a fair price to pay for being on the ground". Housley contends that one of the reasons he felt he was able to report freely was because he could write reports without needing to have every story approved by Washington. However, it is noteworthy that Housley was reporting for a news outlet which politically aligned with the Republican administration during the Iraq War, which may account for Housley having a different experience to the American journalists reporting for other outlets. From his perspective, Housley believes that U.S. reporters from outlets with any political affiliation were given the same access, although the interviews with journalists from a wide range of different outlets did not indicate that this was the case.

However, Housley (2016) also acknowledged that while he never felt restricted from asking tough questions, he did note that if a U.S. journalist is perceived as not being fair, “[the reporter] might not get answers... The administration doesn’t like to be second guessed or [caught] in fibs and this may affect access [for the journalist] in future stories”. Housley thus points to the subjective nature of the enforcement of official guidelines, the existence of implicit regulations, and how the perception of ‘fairness’ and the manner in which the U.S. administration was represented in news coverage could possibly influence a journalist’s status. It is therefore reasonable to consider that Housley’s contention that the guidelines were not overly restrictive and did not impair a journalist’s capacity to report freely and openly may be in part a result of the political affiliation of Fox News, a conservative network which overwhelmingly supported the U.S. administration’s agenda and initiatives during the Iraq War. Housley’s experience thus illuminates the impact of the politicised nature of the U.S. media, discussed in Chapter 5 as a structural factor of the media which impacted the Iraq War conflict reporting. As an employee of a conservative network, Housley’s association with Fox News may have directly impacted on his experience and perspective reporting from Iraq, as the politicised nature of the U.S. media would suggest that journalists reporting for this network would maintain alignment with the U.S. administration’s main narrative and agenda as a result of their parallel political affiliations. Therefore, while Housley did not believe a strategy to combat the official and unofficial regulations was necessary because they did not diminish journalists’ ability to report openly from Iraq, this appears to be an outlying perspective which may have been influenced by the political affiliation of Fox News which closely aligned with the conservative Bush administration.

Thus, the overall majority of the reflections of U.S. media representatives suggest that the trend of the media to be widely compliant with the U.S. administration’s regulations and pressures contributed to shaping the largely one-sided Iraq War coverage, often encouraged and generated by self-censorship and underlying economic interests. Media writer Michael Wolff summarises these beliefs and considers that

“’beyond getting rid of Saddam Hussein himself, what then? What was the larger goal - and, by the way, how would we accomplish it? Once in, if it all went wrong, how would we get out? The perfect obviousness of these questions, the clear necessity of having to ask these questions, and the failure of the media to make them a central part of the story demonstrates, rather painfully, that the American media was either hopelessly asleep at the switch, or so conflicted in its desires (to curry favor with the Bush Administration, to please the managers of the media corporations that owned the news outlets, not to disturb the shareholders of these corporations, not to look foolish when, if as the administration was promising, the war got over fast) that it was unable to do its job’” (Schechter, 2012, p.311). Jamail (2012, p.291) concludes that “what needs serious and sustained attention is the fact that the Pentagon has dominated not only the battlefield but the media landscape in which that battlefield is reported… I believe [the U.S. media] has been proved guilty of deception, beyond reasonable doubt”. The reflections from U.S. media representatives highlighted in this section thus support the assertion that an unequal balance of power existed in U.S. state-media relations during the Iraq War conflict reporting. The next chapter will provide insight into the politics of conflict reporting by highlighting this unequal power in the U.S. state-media relationship as a key finding, and consider how this imbalance was encouraged and generated by the strategies and interests of the U.S. administration in combination with those of the U.S. media, which contributed to motivating this apparent trend of compliance and which then in turn promoted the one-sided and often misleading coverage throughout the Iraq War.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a discussion from the U.S. media perspective, which provides insight into the politics of conflict reporting and U.S. state-media relations during the Iraq War. First, the economic interests of the U.S. media were highlighted so that following sections could consider how these impacted the trends and strategies of the U.S. media during this time. This chapter then illuminated the predominant trend for U.S.

journalists to abide by the official restrictions and unofficial regulations placed upon them by the U.S. administration. The U.S. media's strategies which impacted upon the Iraq War conflict reporting were examined, including the capacity to challenge or resist the U.S. administration strategies and framing, and demonstrated how the business considerations of the U.S. media were closely connected to these strategies. The final section presented the reflections of U.S. media personnel and their critical viewpoints about the role the U.S. media played the Iraq War reporting. Collectively, this chapter has argued that the array of economic interests and strategies of the U.S. media contributed to generating the one-sided and often misleading conflict reporting which supported the U.S. administration's agenda and initiatives, established in Chapter 5 as the principal theme of this coverage.

This chapter has thus addressed the second research sub-question for this thesis by considering how the U.S. media impacted upon the Iraq War coverage, and provided insight into the specific U.S. state-media relations which contributed to the politics of Iraq War conflict reporting. This chapter has illuminated how economic interests drove U.S. journalists and outlets to implement strategies which would increase their audiences and ratings, provide them with credibility, and maintain their access to conflict zones, official personnel, and information. As demonstrated in this chapter, these business interests largely motivated the U.S. journalists' trend of compliance with the U.S. administration's official regulations and implicit guidelines, which in turn often encouraged framing in a manner that would support the official narrative and administration's perspective. The strategies of the U.S. administration and U.S. media thus appear to be remarkably intertwined, often promoting and reinforcing each other. This chapter has provided insight into the interaction of these strategies, and has pointed to the apparent unequal power relations, which shifted more control to the U.S. administration, and which appears to have become evident in many ways as a result of the administration's capacity to impact the U.S. media's economic interests. The next chapter will build upon this analysis and consider how these strategies and U.S. state-media relations shaped the Iraq War conflict reporting, and the ultimate impact on the politics of U.S. conflict reporting more broadly.

Chapter 8: Discussion of Findings and Conclusions

Introduction

Ignatieff (2000, p.196) declares that “truth is always a casualty in war...the media creates the illusion that what we are seeing is true. In reality, nothing is what it seems”. This thesis has sought to discover how and why this apparent discrepancy in conflict reporting occurs by closely scrutinising U.S. state-media relations and unpacking the specific strategies of the U.S. administration and U.S. media during the Iraq War conflict reporting. Previous chapters have pointed to the ways in which these strategies were frequently mutually reinforcing, and often promoted and enhanced the interests of each other. The goal of this chapter is to highlight more explicitly how and why these strategies and interests concurrently impacted upon each other, and ultimately generated the largely one-sided and misleading Iraq War coverage, as established earlier in the thesis. By so doing, this chapter seeks to answer the third research sub-question for this thesis, as well as the main research question, by providing unique insight into the implications of U.S. state-media relations on the politics of conflict reporting.

The first part of this chapter will revisit the research questions of this thesis and discuss how previous chapters have addressed them. The following section will then illuminate the key findings and themes from this study: that the one-sided nature of the Iraq War coverage arose because of coinciding interests of the U.S. administration and U.S. media which made this narrative mutually beneficial to both parties, and that unequal power relations which favoured the U.S. administration also reinforced the conditions for the perpetuation of the official narrative. This chapter will then consider the wider implications of the Iraq War conflict reporting and the greater impact of the U.S. state-media relationship by highlighting the influence of this coverage on public opinion and on prolonging the conflict and delaying the withdrawal of forces. This chapter will conclude by

considering further extended research opportunities on this topic, and the wider applications of the findings from this study. Throughout, this chapter will highlight the contribution to knowledge of this thesis and its unique perspective and insight into the politics of conflict reporting and U.S. state-media relations.

8.1 Revisiting the Research Questions

In order to address the principal research question for this study, to what extent U.S. state-media relations impacted the Iraq War conflict reporting, this thesis focused on three research sub-questions. Chapter 5 first provided context and background for the Iraq War in order to establish the key themes and features of this coverage, upon which this study would build. By scrutinising and redeploying existing research in this area, Chapter 5 demonstrated the predominant feature of this coverage, that there was a largely one-sided and often misleading narrative throughout the Iraq War conflict reporting which primarily supported the U.S. administration's agenda and initiatives. Drawing from the existing reporting statistics and data which had already outlined the specific frames, language, and narratives during both the pre-invasion period and the Iraq War, this chapter developed a distinct perspective and empirical insight by classifying the dramatisation, inaccurate misperceptions, 'us versus them' narrative, and overreliance on official sources as contributing features which collectively contributed to generating this principal theme, by illustrating how these features ultimately supported the U.S. administration's narrative and agenda in Iraq. The primary research conducted for this study was also employed in this chapter to provide unique insight into the coverage, and as summarised by Goldenberg (2016), "we now know that this war was based on false pretence and [there was] no evidence for justifications for war; it was a lie built by the Bush administration and repeated by [the] media".

After establishing the predominant themes of this coverage and the contributing features, answering the research sub-questions then unpacked how and why the Iraq War conflict reporting appeared to be one-sided and often misleading. Chapter 6 addressed

the first research sub-question, which asks to what extent the U.S. administration impacted the Iraq War conflict reporting, by critically examining the U.S. administration's official and implicit strategies, and how these influenced the Iraq War coverage. This chapter determined that the U.S. administration utilised these strategies to pursue its own interests and influenced the conflict reporting by constructing a narrative which would support its agenda and initiatives for military action in Iraq. This chapter highlighted how the official strategies provided the legal capacity for the U.S. administration to regulate the U.S. media and limit information available for publication, and how implicit strategies reinforced the perpetuation of the official narrative throughout the coverage. Several of these strategies, for example, the use of language to demonise Hussein, appear to parallel closely the key themes in the Iraq War conflict reporting, such as the 'us versus them' narrative and the inaccurate misperceptions which linked Hussein to the September 11th attacks. Therefore, this chapter considered that unequal power relations between the U.S. administration and U.S. media may have existed which allowed the administration greater capacity to impact the conflict reporting, and suggested that this imbalance of power appeared to have manifested in part due to the employment of these strategies, a key discovery which will be explored in more details in the next section.

Chapter 7 sought to unpack further this relationship and how U.S. state-media relations impacted Iraq War conflict reporting by considering the U.S. media's perspective and strategies which furnished the media's abilities to influence this coverage, thus addressing the second research sub-question which asked to what extent the U.S. media influenced the Iraq War conflict reporting. The U.S. media strategies included the reactive strategy of responding to the U.S. administration's policies which restricted and regulated journalists, as well as the active strategy of framing. This chapter highlighted the role and impact of the U.S. media's economic interests, which often drove these strategies, as well as demonstrating how actions construed as challenging or resisting the U.S. administration's strategies could yield severe consequences for these business considerations. Therefore, this chapter continued to provide insight into how unequal

power relations emerged by illustrating how the economic goals of U.S. outlets and journalists were often at risk if the official narrative or formal and implicit regulations placed upon reporters were challenged. Particularly considering the empirical evidence of the journalists' experiences interviewed for this study, it was discovered that fears about such reprisals led to the trend of compliance and appeared to shift power to the U.S. administration, enabling it to assert more control and have a greater impact on the Iraq War conflict reporting. Thus, this chapter indicates that U.S. state-media relations during the Iraq War may have restricted U.S. journalists' right to the freedom of the press as protected under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, a potentially concerning outcome of these unequal power relations which this chapter will revisit in the following section.

Together, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 addressed the first and second research sub-questions in order to carefully analyse the politics of conflict reporting and the impact of U.S. state-media relations, by exploring the U.S. administration and U.S. media strategies which sought to influence the Iraq War conflict reporting and support their interests. Building on the existing research which established statistics and themes about the Iraq War reporting content, this thesis has provided a distinct perspective by critically examining official statements made by the administration and the U.S. DOD embedded journalist guidelines, and has offered new insights through key interviews which have illuminated the specific experiences of U.S. politicians and media personnel. Taken as a whole, this research has sought to shed light on the politics of conflict reporting and the intricacy and dynamic of the U.S. state-media relationship, in order to ultimately consider how and why the Iraq War coverage was generated to appear one-sided and uncritical of the U.S. administration. These chapters have also pointed to some of the implications of these strategies and the interaction between the U.S. administration and the U.S. media, in order to understand how these strategies impacted and reinforced each other and allowed unequal power relations to emerge. The following sections will therefore address the third research sub-question by first explicitly highlighting the key findings which have

been determined by this study, and then examining the wider implications of these strategies and U.S. state-media relations.

8.2 Key Findings

Embedded journalist Robert Fisk has defined the U.S. state-media relationship as “incestuous” and asserts that the U.S. media “have set a narrative where instead of telling us what they think is happening or what they know is happening, they tell us what they are told by spokesmen... I think it is this cosy, incestuous, dangerous relationship between press and administration, between sources and access which causes many of these problems” (Miller, 2004, pp. 220-21). This section will provide insight into this observation by highlighting two key themes and findings which have emerged from this study, and thus present some empirical insights and perspective into the politics of conflict reporting and U.S. state-media relations. First this section will argue that the coinciding interests and strategies of the U.S. administration, such as the goal to emphasise the official narrative which supported military action in Iraq, and the interests and strategies U.S. media, including various business considerations, concurrently promoted and reinforced the emergence of key themes and features of the Iraq War coverage, because it was mutually beneficial for both. The next sub-section will then assert that despite this relationship between the U.S. administration and U.S. media being mutually beneficial, in fact unequal power relations were apparent during the Iraq War, and ultimately the administration was able to cultivate more power and capacity to control the conflict reporting narratives.

This section will thus address the third research sub-question and main research question by providing insight into why and how U.S. state-media relations impacted the Iraq War conflict reporting. Throughout the previous chapters, this thesis has built these findings and arguments by drawing from the existing research to establish key themes in the Iraq War conflict reporting, and added empirical insights from the interviews which have been conducted for this study as well as critical examinations of official statements

made by the administration and the DOD official guidelines for embedded journalists. This section will continue to draw from these voices and perspectives in order to provide unique and distinct insight into the impact of U.S. state-media relations on the politics of conflict reporting.

8.2.1 A One-Sided Narrative, Generated by Coinciding Interests of the U.S. Administration and U.S. Media

In the interview conducted for this study, Vice President Gore (2016) declared that the Iraq War “was really criminal and conducted on the basis of completely false premises... The deception and dishonesty was breath-taking [as a result of the] manipulation of information”. He considers that state propaganda was so embedded within the Iraq War conflict reporting due to a “combination of media not doing their job and being scared to challenge the administration”, to the point that it was very difficult to ask questions about why the U.S. entered the war, or to challenge the assertions about the success of ongoing military action (Gore, 2016). Vice President Gore (2016) thus points to potential infringements on the U.S. media’s First Amendment rights, and concludes that this “trend is not a good one”. The previous two chapters have unpacked the specific interests and strategies of the U.S. administration and U.S. media which sought to influence the Iraq War conflict reporting and pointed to the ways in which the concurrent deployment of these strategies promoted this widespread one-sided and often misleading coverage. This study has specifically discerned that the U.S. administration’s strategies to control information and produce narratives to support its own agenda and initiatives, together with the U.S. media’s strategies to pursue its economic goals, concurrently shaped this principal Iraq War conflict reporting theme, because they were mutually beneficial and reinforced and promoted each other.

Specifically, the U.S. administration sought to avoid the ‘Vietnam Syndrome’ by employing strategies which officially restricted journalists and information, in order to ensure that the official narrative was carefully selected and remained largely uncontested.

At the same time, it was also in the U.S. media's interest to comply with these regulations in order for individual reporters to protect their access, reputations, and jobs, and for media outlets to maintain credibility and high ratings or readership, which might otherwise have been jeopardised if the U.S. administration's agenda or initiatives were questioned or critiqued in reports. Therefore, the trend of compliance and framing reports to support the U.S. administration not only reinforced the interests and strategies of the state, but also assisted the U.S. media's pursuit of its business interests, by aligning with the official narrative. By unpacking the specific strategies and interests of the U.S. administration and U.S. media, this study has provided a distinct perspective and unique insight into the intricate and dynamic U.S. state-media relationship, determining that publishing one-sided stories which supported the official narrative was mutually beneficial because the U.S. administration was able largely to pursue its objectives without contestation or critique, and, in exchange for this compliance and alliance, the U.S. media could continue to pursue various business considerations and goals of its own.

The original conceptual lens for this thesis has also examined how state propaganda is established in conflict reporting, and which has helped this thesis develop a distinct contribution, by closely and critically analysing the specific strategies and interests that shaped the unique U.S. state-media relations which impacted the Iraq War conflict reporting in this particular manner. Together, the propaganda model and agenda-setting theory provide a lens which considers how the widespread publication of the official narrative was motivated by the media's business considerations, contributed to generating the apparent state propaganda in reporting, and which in turn helped to set and defend the political and military agenda, thus supporting both the U.S. administration's and the U.S. media's interests. Although both U.S. politicians and U.S. journalists seem aware that engaging in this state-media relationship can influence conflict reporting and often encourage one-sided coverage, the symbiotic and mutually beneficial nature of this relationship thus often encourages participation, which is a key issue impacting conflict reporting and the extent to which coverage can be misleading.

The overreliance on official sources during the Iraq War reporting is especially noteworthy, as it provides a clear example of this finding and demonstrates that the strategies and interests of the U.S. administration and U.S. media were closely intertwined and reinforced each other, both ultimately benefiting from the wide publication of the official narrative with limited critique or dissenting views. Relying on official sources allowed the U.S. administration to maintain control of the specific narrative and information available for publication, and at the same time the U.S. media's business interests and goals, such as maintaining 'embed status', competing for top interviews and new information, and preserving perceived credibility, could be met by citing government officials (Mermin, 2004; DiMaggio, 2010; 2017; Berenger, 2004; Brinson and Stohl, 2009; Richardson, 2007; Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010; Hakanen and Nikolaev, 2006; Laity, 2005). Therefore the overreliance on official sources, categorised by this thesis as one of the main themes apparent in this coverage, provides a specific and clear example of how the strategies and interests of both the U.S. administration and U.S. media were closely intertwined, mutually reinforcing and beneficial for each, and ultimately encouraged and promoted the one-sided official narrative which appears to have dominated the Iraq War reporting.

The overreliance on official sources also points to the existence of unequal power relations, the key discovery discussed in the next section, as the U.S. administration not only had the explicit legal capacity to limit the scope of sources utilised by embedded reporters, but it also could employ implicit strategies in order to deter journalists from seeking alternative perspectives or dissenting views to those in Washington. The following section will highlight this finding by demonstrating how, although the one-sided coverage of the Iraq War appeared to be generated by largely mutually beneficial U.S. state-media relations, there did appear to be unequal power relations which shifted more control in this relationship to the U.S. administration.

8.2.2 Unequal Power Relations Favouring the U.S. Administration

While this thesis has observed that the relationship between the U.S. administration and U.S. media appeared to be mutually beneficial during the Iraq War, as their strategies to impact the conflict reporting often supported and reinforced each other's interests, this study has also determined that unequal power relations appear to have been evident when considering the extensive impact and control that the U.S. administration had on the conflict reporting. Chapter 4 argued that in response to highly critical coverage during the Vietnam War, the U.S. administration sought to gain back control of the narrative, as evident during the Gulf War when new media restrictions began to be implemented. However, by the time of the Iraq War, the research for this study has found that significant unequal power relations between the U.S. administration and the U.S. media existed. This section will highlight how these unequal power relations manifested, because of the extensive capacity of the U.S. administration's strategies to restrict the U.S. media, and the concomitant trend of compliance on the part of the media to willingly abide by the regulations and limitations placed upon them, thus shifting power to the administration to significantly impact this coverage and ultimately promote the official narrative throughout the Iraq War conflict reporting.

The literature has first suggested that unequal power relations may have been apparent during the Iraq War conflict reporting and considered its impact on the coverage. Norris, Kern and Just (2003, p.3) observe that the U.S. media essentially functioned to "reinforce support for political leaders" and Laity (2005, p.276) similarly asserts that "the media understandably object to the idea of anyone else using them as a weapon, but it is a reality they cannot escape". Jamail (2012, p.290) declares that the U.S. media "blatantly abdicated its role of objective informer" during the Iraq War which resulted in "fraud" and "large-scale deception that all sections of the media have perpetuated on its readers and viewers, at the behest of the American administrative system". Kull, Ramsay and Lewis (2003, p.593) add that in the case of the Iraq War, the U.S. media became "a means of transmission for the administration, rather than a critical filter". These researchers

therefore indicate that when considering the impact on conflict reporting, the U.S. administration appears to have been able to control and influence this coverage to a greater extent than the U.S. media, which also failed to question or critique the official narrative or assertions. Therefore, it is suggested in the literature that this unequal balance of power in the U.S. state-media relationship contributed to the misleading, inaccurate and one-sided coverage.

This thesis not only affirms the claim that unequal power relations existed between the U.S. administration and U.S. media, but has also provided empirical evidence and insight into this unequal balance of power. The research conducted for this study has indicated that the specific strategies of the U.S. administration which impacted upon the Iraq War conflict reporting, such as implementing formal restrictions or implicit pressure and regulations on the U.S. media, were significant contributing factors to generating unequal power relations. This thesis finds that the U.S. administration strategies sought not only to restrict the U.S. media and limit information available for publication by targeting the business considerations of the U.S. media, such as threats to jobs, reputations, or access, but also provided a legal platform and formal capacity to tie the hands of the U.S. media, evident in the restrictions within embedded journalists' contracts or by citing 'security reasons' to withhold information or refusing to answer questions. When this occurred, the U.S. media was often unable to combat these strategies, as pushing back could result in detrimental repercussions to economic interests, including having access or embed status retracted or causing damage to reputations, which was counterproductive to the overall aim of seeking information. The means for the U.S. reporters to challenge or resist the restrictions placed upon them thus appeared to be limited, and was often met with push back from their outlets, which were largely responsive to their institutional interests. Hence, a widespread trend of compliance can be detected, where the U.S. media complied with the official and unofficial regulations, in exchange for support for their business considerations.

Providing original insight into this finding, the specific experiences of the journalists interviewed for this study and highlighted throughout this thesis have demonstrated the existence and impact of this unequal power, which was often reinforced through the U.S. administration's legal capacity to implement official restrictions as well as implicit pressures and threats to access, jobs or reputation. Significantly, Chapter 6 highlighted Anna Badkhen's experience as an embedded journalist in Iraq who was ultimately sent back to the U.S. after writing a story which was not 'positive' enough about the American military action, despite being factually correct. This example in particular provides evidence which reveals the subjective nature of the official guidelines which permitted U.S. officials to terminate Badkhen's position at their discretion due to their interpretation of these rules, in combination with the impact of unofficial regulations which targeted her job and access for publishing a story which was perceived to critique or contradict the official narrative. Badkhen's experience thus illuminates the capacity of the U.S. administration to influence conflict reporting, and the consequences of appearing to challenge the official narrative, consequences which ultimately motivated many U.S. journalists to comply with the restrictions and publish reports which aligned with the U.S. administration's interests and narrative. Badkhen's experience also highlights a concerning outcome of this unequal balance of power: that U.S. journalists' First Amendment rights appear to have been jeopardised as a result of this relationship and dynamic. This Amendment guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of the press; however, this thesis has determined that these constitutional rights were often directly violated through censorship in the form of both official restrictions and implicit regulations as a consequence of coverage which was not perceived as supportive of the U.S. administration's agenda, narrative, or assertions.

DiMaggio (2016) also provides empirical insight into this finding, and asserts that the U.S. administration's official strategies, specifically to restrict U.S. embedded journalists' access to the conflict zone and ability to gather and publish information, were significant factors which shifted the balance of power to the U.S. administration. While this

relationship appeared to be mutually beneficial because the U.S. media's business interests were supported and enhanced by complying with the official guidelines, these reporters were closely regulated by the U.S. administration and tightly limited to the specific zones of conflict, information, and official personnel purposely provided to them by the U.S. administration, which was thus able to exert significant power and control over the conflict reporting through these strict restrictions. Goldenberg (2016) adds that in her experience of reporting during the Iraq War, "journalists did they best within limited circumstances to report accurately... it's a mosaic and you can only report your little bit of reality". Goldenberg provides empirical insight into the direct impact that official restrictions had upon the capacity for reporters to comprehensively and accurately depict the conflict, and how, despite the efforts to do so, significant limits were placed on the scope of reporting in order to ensure such reporting would support the U.S. administration's agenda.

DiMaggio (2016) also comments on how the U.S. administration's unofficial strategies and implicit pressures specifically contributed to generating unequal power relations, arguing that the pressures and threats directed at the U.S. media for critiquing or questioning leaders are greater in the U.S. than in many other nations with formally independent media systems, and this unofficial regulation directly contributed to the U.S. media representing the Iraq War in the ways desired by the administration. DiMaggio (2016) points to the specific pressures on journalists to refrain from adding opinions, judgements, or critiques which consequently led to the U.S. media not having an "independent role... if you're not asking tough questions or looking deeper into if these things you're being told are true". Therefore, the unofficial regulations and implicit pressures placed upon the U.S. media also provide insight into the manifestation of unequal power relations between the state and media.

The U.S. administration thus possessed several formal and informal strategies to target access privileges, jobs, and reputations in order to penalise the U.S. media for noncompliance, while simultaneously implementing an incentive system which further

encouraged and supported compliance, strategies which have been critically analysed in this thesis. The U.S. media not only tended to comply in order to protect economic interests, but were also unable to seek access, information, or perspectives beyond those allowed to them by the U.S. administration due to formal and legal restrictions, thus reinforcing the official narrative and one-sided reporting as the predominant theme of this conflict reporting. This study has therefore found that U.S. administration's collective strategies appear to not only have impacted upon the Iraq War conflict reporting, but also contributed to generating the unequal power relations which existed within the U.S. state-media relationship. Thus the critical exploration of the various strategies and interests of the U.S. administration and U.S. media has developed this empirical finding and provides unique insight into this unequal balance of power and the politics of conflict reporting.

This study has also found that structural factors explored in Chapter 5 provide insight into how unequal power relations were generated during the Iraq War, and this thesis therefore provides a unique perspective by theorising about the impact of these factors in conjunction with U.S. state-media relations. This thesis has theorised that the U.S. media has become politicised, which is an issue not only because the major media outlets are closely linked to one political affiliation and tend to perpetuate this perspective, but also because the U.S. administration's restrictions and incentives for the U.S. media create a reality where narratives are manufactured to present certain information and conceal other facts or events. The politicised system is compounded by the significant decrease in investigatory journalism during the Iraq War period, which did not provide the U.S. media with the resources or capacity to thoroughly investigate claims made by officials or fact-check information, but instead encouraged the official narrative to prevail. The platform of 24-hour televised news coverage further reinforced and promoted the unequal power relations, because U.S. journalists and outlets were in competition to keep up with the continuous news and break top stories. This also largely discouraged in-depth analysis and instead resulted in the U.S. media relying on officials for information that often did not undergo any further investigation. The corporate ownership structure of the

U.S. media was another a factor which may have contributed to the prioritisation of economic interests and the trend of compliance, motivated largely by journalists' and outlets' concerns about repercussion to business interests and goals. This thesis has critically explored these structural factors together with U.S. state-media relations and thus provides a unique perspective into how and why these factors appear to have created a platform which supported the U.S. administration's ability to predominantly control the narrative.

Throughout this study, reporters, politicians and researchers have observed the capacity for the U.S. administration to utilise strategies which restricted and threatened the U.S. media in order to seek to maintain control over the information which would be published. Such actions would ultimately shape the Iraq War narrative to support its agenda and initiatives. Thus, while the U.S. media did benefit in many ways from aligning with the official narrative, the research for this study has determined that the U.S. administration maintained more power in this relationship. This study specifically found that unequal power relations emerged because of the capacity of the U.S. administration's strategies not only to target the U.S. media's economic interests which motivated the widespread trend of compliance, but also by creating a legal platform to maintain control over the scope of information available for publication, such as the restrictions in embedded journalists' guidelines or by citing 'security reasons' to justify withholding information or refusing to answer questions. Therefore, this thesis has concluded that the capacity for the U.S. administration's strategies to target the U.S. media's economic interests to minimise any noncompliance, as well as the legal and formalised means to control information, contributed to shifting greater power to the U.S. administration to impact the Iraq War conflict reporting, and perpetuating the official narrative.

This thesis has thus provided a unique and distinct perspective and insight into the politics of U.S. conflict reporting and how U.S. state-media relations impacted the Iraq War coverage by first establishing and categorising the key themes and features of the Iraq War coverage, and then unpacking the interests and strategies of the both the U.S.

administration and U.S. media in order to critically examine the dynamic of this relationship which ultimately contributed to generating and maintaining this unequal balance of power. The following section will continue to provide insight into the politics of conflict reporting by considering the wider implication of this U.S. state-media relationship.

8.3 Wider Implications of Findings

The aim of this thesis is to provide critical insight into the politics of conflict reporting, by carefully scrutinising how U.S. state-media relations impacted upon the conflict reporting of the Iraq War, and this section will now consider the wider implications of this conflict reporting, first on public opinion about the war, and second on the eventual withdrawal. By so doing, this section will demonstrate the greater significance and impact of the Iraq War conflict reporting, and in turn highlight the importance of understanding the U.S. state-media relations which shaped it.

8.3.1 Direct Influence on Public Opinion to Support War

The research for this thesis has illustrated how the key themes and features of this coverage, such as the 'us versus them' narrative, the inaccurate misperceptions, and the largely one-sided reporting which supported the U.S. administration, collectively built the platform on which the U.S. administration could justify its military agenda and initiatives. This section will highlight the further finding that, as a result, this conflict reporting had a significant impact on the public's opinion about the war. Chapter 4 argued that the Vietnam War taught the U.S. administration an invaluable lesson: that conflict reporting has a direct and powerful impact on public support for a war, which can either assist the military agenda and initiatives, or, as in the case of the Vietnam War, be severely detrimental to these aims as a result of extreme public outcry (Carruthers, 2000; Hoskins, 2004; Monahan, 2010; Culbert, 2005; Spencer, 2005). Therefore, in response to the 'Vietnam Syndrome', "more than ever before, modern military campaigns are likely to become struggles of information in the battle for the high ground of public opinion. In such

a struggle the management of perception - the battle for ‘hearts and minds’ - will continue to be about words and pictures and not just about bombs and aeroplanes” (Welch, 2005, p.xviii). As Norris, Kern and Just (2003, p.13) explain, “the news frame will influence public opinion, especially if there are mainly ‘one-sided’ messages...[and] shape the public policy agenda, including the response to events by government officials and the security services, both directly, and also indirectly, via public opinion”. This section will demonstrate how, during both the pre-invasion period and the Iraq War, public opinion was thus directly shaped by this conflict reporting.

8.3.1.1 Pre-Invasion Period

Kull, Ramsay and Lewis (2003) conducted an extensive study on the pre-invasion conflict reporting and the link between public support for an invasion and public belief specifically of the inaccurate misperceptions that Chapter 5 determined to be key features of the narrative and content. Kull, Ramsay and Lewis (2003) tested the public perception of the link between Hussein and al-Qaeda, the existence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, and global support, including the Iraqi public, for an invasion, and this research reveals that 60% of all Americans held at least one of these inaccurate misperceptions. Kull, Ramsay and Lewis (2003) determined that individuals who believed one misperception were 2.9 times more likely than those with no misperceptions to support the administration’s desire for war, while those with three misperceptions were 9.8 times more likely to support the administration’s war initiative. Specifically, those who believed Hussein was linked to the September 11th attacks were 2.5 times more likely to support U.S. unilateral action without United Nations Security Council (UNSC) approval, and 80% cited this connection as the major reason for supporting a potential unilateral invasion. 73% of individuals who believed that Iraqi weapons of mass destruction had been found supported an invasion, twice as likely as those who did not believe this assertion. 81% of those who believed the misperceptions that the Iraqi public and greater global community supported a unilateral U.S. invasion also agreed with the U.S.

administration's desire for a war with Iraq, 3.3 times more likely than those who did not hold this belief.

Kull, Ramsay and Lewis (2003, p.591) assert that the "the first and most obvious reason that the public had so many of these misperceptions is that the Bush administration made numerous statements that could easily be construed as asserting these falsehoods" in order to legitimise and justify the need for an invasion. They add that these "pro-war views...downplay[ed] the lack of evidence of links between Iraq and al Qaeda, the fact that WMD were not being found, and that world public opinion was critical of the war" (Kull, Ramsay and Lewis, 2003, p.593). Several other researchers (Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Gershkoff and Kushner, 2005; Altheide, 2006; DiMaggio, 2010) support this claim, and believe that it was the assertions and statements of the U.S. administration, and the extent to which official sources were utilised in the news, which made the conflict reporting compelling in its ability to directly impact public opinion and build support for an invasion. Jasperson and El-Kikhia (2003) conducted a study which revealed that after a speech given by President Bush shortly after the September 11th attacks, the President's approval rating jumped from 54% to 81%, and support for an invasion was 88%. DiMaggio (2010) similarly found that in response to President Bush's speech immediately after the September 11th attacks, over 80% of individuals who paid attention to this speech supported Bush's handling of the crisis, the use of force, going to war, and a broader 'war on terror', compared to less than 20% of individuals asked the same questions but who paid no attention to President Bush's speech. DiMaggio (2010) also presents statistics which reveal that for individuals who paid attention to President Bush's January 2003 State of the Union speech, nearly 70% believed the inaccurate misperceptions, including al-Qaeda's ties to Iraq and Iraq's threat of weapons of mass destruction. These respondents also supported Bush's handling of the Iraq crisis and the use of force, including ground troops, compared to about 30% for individuals asked the same policy questions but who did not pay attention to this speech (DiMaggio, 2010). Gershkoff and Kushner (2005, p.526) thus conclude that "the levels of support for this war

were so high and so largely unconditional that spontaneous patriotism alone cannot account for it...the administration juxtaposed allusions to Iraq with the terms *terror*, *bin Laden*, and *al Qaeda*...leaving the American public with a one-sided flow of information. The more people watched television news about the war in Iraq, the more they were exposed to the Bush administration's rhetoric".

This research therefore indicates that the U.S. administration's strategy to utilise purposeful language in combination with the U.S. media's overreliance on official sources mutually reinforced the establishment of these inaccurate claims and the greater narrative which would support an invasion. The key themes and features of the pre-invasion content identified in this thesis, such as the 'us versus them' narrative, inaccurate misperceptions, and overreliance on official sources, thus appear to have specifically contributed to the impact on public opinion, and, ultimately, support for military action. The impact on public opinion is therefore especially relevant for this study and the research questions which it addresses, particularly for the strategies utilised to impact conflict reporting. It is evident that these strategies, such as the purposeful use of language, not only impacted the conflict reporting but that this rhetoric which was widespread in the coverage had a clear effect on public opinion. The U.S. administration's interest to overcome the 'Vietnam Syndrome' by maintaining public support in order to continue to pursue its military agenda therefore appeared to be effectively attained through these strategies.

It is also important to consider the role that the unequal power relations in the U.S. state-media relationship played in shaping public opinion, as the U.S. administration's capacity to utilise strategies to ensure the official narrative was perpetuated throughout the pre-invasion coverage subsequently promoted the one-sided coverage which justified reasons for the public to support an invasion. Kull, Ramsay and Lewis (2003, p.597) assert that "what is worrisome is that it appears that the President has the capacity to lead members of the public to assume false beliefs in support of his position. In the case of the Iraq war, this dynamic appears to have played a critical role". Gore (2007, pp.25-26) also

declares that “it is a serious indictment of the present quality of our political discourse that almost three-quarters of all Americans were so easily led to believe that Saddam Hussein was personally responsible for the attacks of September 11, 2001, and that so many Americans *still* believe that most of the hijackers on September 11 were Iraqis. And it is an indictment of the way our democracy is currently operating that more than 40 percent were so easily convinced that Iraq did in fact have nuclear weapons, even after the most important evidence presented - classified documents that depicted an attempt by Saddam Hussein’s regime to purchase yellowcake uranium from the country of Niger - was revealed to have been forged. Clearly the current administration has misused fear to manipulate the political process”. These researchers support this study’s finding that the unequal power relations existed during this period, and suggest that this imbalance ultimately allowed the U.S. administration to utilise conflict reporting as a platform to influence the public to support an invasion, despite that such reporting often appears to have been based on inaccurate information or misleading justifications. Rhetoric demonising Hussein and creating links between terrorism and Iraq were thus U.S. administration strategies which not only impacted the conflict reporting but appear to have also influenced public opinion. The ‘Vietnam Syndrome’ illuminates how public support is a significant determining factor in the U.S. administration’s capacity to pursue its military agenda, and in the case of the pre-invasion period, it is apparent that the unequal power relations evident in the U.S. state-media relationship advanced the administration’s ability to harness the power of the media in order to assist its military agenda by shaping a public consciousness which believed an invasion was necessary.

8.3.1.2 Iraq War

As the coverage which supported the U.S. administration’s narrative and justified ongoing military action continued during the Iraq War reporting, there was a corresponding impact on public opinion. The literature specifically observes how the perpetuation of the inaccurate misperceptions in the Iraq War coverage continued to

directly shape public opinion, despite the fact that there was no definitive evidence to support the claims of the existence of weapons of mass destruction or the Iraqi regime's links to the September 11th terrorist attacks (DiMaggio, 2010; Brinson and Stohl, 2009; Thussu and Freedman, 2012). Brinson and Stohl (2009, p.229-230) theorise that "if media framing of terrorism is one-sided and without debate regarding sources, connections, implications, policies and prescription – then individuals will be left with nothing to evaluate. The only viewpoints or symbolic images in their heads used in judgement making, are those of the dominant news fame...one-sided messages of terrorism will influence public opinion, how people evaluate terrorism and its actors, and perceptions of future risks and threats". Thus as key themes and narratives such as the inaccurate misperceptions and 'us versus them' narrative continued to appear through the media coverage of the Iraq War, the public continued to be led to believe that the war was just and necessary. In addition, as Chapter 5 highlighted, casualty statistics in the Iraq War conflict reporting were largely misleading because the numbers were either downplayed or generalised, and therefore the public was also persuaded to believe that the destruction and brutality of the war was minimal. Shaping public beliefs to continue to support the war was significant and important for the U.S. administration, to allow it to continue to pursue its military agenda in Iraq, and, as the next section will discuss, prolong the conflict and seek to delay withdrawal.

Although the next section will highlight how public approval did begin to decline after 2004, the principal reason cited was that the war was no longer 'worth it', and the inaccurate misperceptions in particular still continued to be widely believed by the public. Therefore, despite wavering public support for the war itself, the effect and significance of the conflict reporting on public opinion was still clear and significant throughout the war. The literature (Miller and Sabir, 2012; Schechter, 2012; Jamail, 2012) observes that during the Iraq War, state propaganda in the coverage existed to such an extent that it widely provided an inaccurate depiction of the war. The impact of President Bush's speeches widely cited throughout the Iraq War coverage continued to be a prevalent

factor in influencing the public's beliefs, as a result of the one-sided narrative, which continued to support and justify military action with little critique or analysis. Badkhen (2016) provides empirical evidence from her perspective reporting in Iraq and similarly reveals that the American people were extremely disconnected from what was really happening in Baghdad because of the misleading conflict reporting. The key themes of this coverage determined in this thesis, such as the inaccurate misperceptions and 'us versus them narrative', which dominated the coverage, thus appear to have directly shaped this public consciousness, often based on incomplete or inaccurate information. Therefore, although the public may have slowly begun to believe that the war was no longer 'worth it', the one-sided coverage which reiterated the official narrative and justified ongoing military action may have actually slowed the public's disproval and delayed a more severe public outcry for withdrawal.

This section has thus highlighted how the pre-invasion and Iraq War conflict reporting directly influenced and shaped public opinion, but also in turn, assisted the U.S. administration with its military agenda by keeping the support of the American people. It is evident that U.S. state-media relations impacted not only the conflict reporting, but also in turn directly shaped public opinion through the widespread publication of this one-sided narrative, and is therefore considered as one of the significant wider implications of the politics of U.S conflict reporting explored throughout this study. The next section will also consider the wider implications on military policy by highlighting the impact of the Iraq War coverage on the delay of withdrawal.

8.3.2 The Impact on Eventual Withdrawal

This section will argue that prolonged and delayed withdrawal was a wider implication of the U.S. state-media relationship, largely encouraged by the U.S. media's continued perpetuation of a narrative which supported the ongoing military involvement. DiMaggio (2010) and Kodrich and Law (2004) assert that even when public opinion clearly began to

shift away from supporting the war, the media continued to reiterate the narratives and justifications for ongoing action. For example, DiMaggio (2010) provides statistics which reveal that the American public began to oppose the war by the end of 2004, citing the general opinion that continued military action was no longer 'worth it'. However across the major mainstream print and television outlets, withdrawal was not advocated until late 2006, but the expression of this point of view was very limited even throughout 2007. During this period, much of the mainstream media still largely campaigned against withdrawal, even claiming that withdrawal would result in a severe increase in Iraqi civilian casualties, although there was never any evidence to support this assertion, and these reports did not acknowledge the evidence which suggested U.S. occupation was actually the cause of continued elevated violence and instability (DiMaggio, 2010). Therefore, even as the American public began to oppose the war, and the global media was uncovering and exposing many of the inconsistencies in the U.S. media about how the war was really going, the U.S. media continued to be wary about advocating for withdrawal and continued to perpetuate the official narrative (DiMaggio, 2010; Kodrich and Law, 2004).

DiMaggio (2010) uses *The New York Times* as a specific example, revealing that between 1 January 2005 and 31 May 2007,139 articles were published about withdrawal, 2% of which cited the 'cost of war' as the argument for withdrawal, 3.6% that the 'war was unwinnable', 14% that the 'American public favours withdrawal' and less than 1% asserting that 'Iraqi public favours withdrawal'. This data therefore suggests that even when arguments for withdrawal were presented, the U.S. media was still not directly critical of the war and remained consistent in its position of upholding and reiterating the U.S. administration's perspective, which supported the war. These 139 articles were not exclusive in their campaign for withdrawal, all of which also included arguments against withdrawal, 65% of which justified ongoing military action by citing 'support the troops' and 'fight terror' as the reasons to continue the conflict. These perspectives are consistent with the themes and narratives of patriotism and the 'us versus them' narrative which, this

thesis has illustrated, were prevalent throughout the Iraq War coverage. As DiMaggio (2010, p.101) observes, downplaying legitimate critiques of the war and reasons for withdrawal continued to ensure that the U.S. was “depicted as a benevolent force, rather than as exacerbating a humanitarian crisis”, especially as the conflict had been prolonged years after the public began to oppose the war.

It thus appears to be evident that the symbiotic and closely intertwined relationship between the U.S. administration and U.S. media, and the U.S. media’s loyalty and willingness to uphold the official narrative supporting the war, continued even after the American public began to oppose the war. The coverage and ultimate prolonging of withdrawal demonstrates the wider implications of the U.S. state-media relations explored in this thesis, which allowed the administration significant control over the coverage, and illuminates the direct impact this relationship can have not only on conflict reporting but also on policy, as the U.S. media continued to perpetuate the official narrative and justification of ongoing conflict for several years. The critical examination of this intertwined and mutually beneficial relationship between the U.S. administration and U.S. media in this thesis may thus provide insight into why the conflict was prolonged and officially continued until withdrawal was finally declared in 2010.

8.4 Further Research

The applications and further considerations for this case study reach beyond the research of the Iraq War conflict reporting. This study provides a comparative tool for assessing how future conflicts in the U.S. are covered, in order to continue building an understanding of developing U.S. state-media relations and the impacts on conflict reporting. Another crucial area to consider will be to seek to understand why it appears there was a significant shift in the U.S. state-media relationship from the Bush administration to the Trump administration. Despite both being Republican Presidents, it is evident that media coverage and support of these administrations differ greatly. While the Bush administration largely maintained the support and loyalty of the U.S. media while

in office, President Trump has been overwhelming critiqued and criticised, with media coverage often bordering on hostility, which even began during his presidential campaign. As there are only eight years separating these two Presidents, the media landscapes are very similar, and yet it appears there has been a complete reversal in the ways that the U.S. media portrays President Trump and the dynamic of the U.S. state-media relationship. The same potential consequences for the U.S. media's economic interests for challenging the U.S. administration and official narrative still exist, and there have been several incidents where President Trump has banned reporters or entire groups of news station from White House Press Conferences, refused to answer certain journalists' questions, or directly attacked the reputation of media representatives or outlets; yet the U.S. media appear to be significantly less concerned about these repercussions than during the Bush presidency, and continue to be openly critical. Therefore, the insights on the politics of conflict reporting and the U.S. state-media relationship examined in this thesis could be built upon in order to assess why this distinct shift has occurred. Further, it may be important also to analyse the state-media relationship in the administration which succeeds the Trump administration, in order to determine if the state-media relations of the Trump era are an anomaly, and if so, why, or if this presidency represents a new trend in U.S. state-media relations which will continue.

Additionally, this study can also be utilised to compare the U.S. coverage of the Iraq War with the conflict reporting in other nations or regions on this same war. Particularly relevant may be a comparative analysis of the U.S. and U.K. coverage of the Iraq War, as there is a significant amount of research which provides data and statistics on the specific narratives and content of U.K. Iraq War coverage, which could then be tested against the themes this thesis has established in the U.S. coverage. This further study could then consider why overlap in perspectives and narratives occurred, as well as why there may have been differentiation in the frames and narratives of Iraq War conflict reporting. Comparing the U.S. coverage to Iraq War conflict reporting in the Middle East may also provide insight into the broader field of the politics of conflict reporting by

exploring how and why the specific narratives constructed in the U.S. appear to significantly differ from those in Middle Eastern coverage, as well as the greater impacts and implications of these disparities.

Conclusion

U.S. state-media relations, and the impact on conflict reporting, is both dynamic and complex, and is generated and moulded through an array of unique interests and strategies, sometimes competing and sometimes mutually reinforcing, which can impact and shape the coverage. This thesis has utilised the Iraq War as a case study in order to unpack the intricacies of this relationship and provide insight into why this coverage appeared to be predominantly one-sided and supportive of the U.S. administration's agenda and initiatives, often at the cost of providing a comprehensive depiction of the war or any thorough and well-rounded analysis. While the existing literature on the Iraq War conflict reporting is extensive, and provided key contextual data for this thesis to draw upon, this thesis contributes to this field of study through a critical examination of U.S. state-media relations in order to understand how and why this conflict reporting appeared to be primarily one-sided and often misleading.

Through a critical analysis of the U.S. DOD embedded journalist guidelines and official statements made by the U.S. administration, in combination with interviews conducted with the relevant politicians and media personnel, this thesis has addressed the research questions initially posed at the start and provided a unique perspective and original contribution which closely examines the specific strategies of both the U.S. administration and U.S. media which impacted on Iraq War coverage, in order to provide new insight into the U.S. state-media relationship. In Chapter 4, this thesis first provided a distinct perspective by signposting the Vietnam War and the Gulf War as key defining points in developing and shifting U.S. state-media relations in order to facilitate an in-depth analysis of this relationship. Chapter 5 then determined and categorised the key themes and features of the pre-invasion period and Iraq War conflict reporting, and

developed an analysis about the structural factors in order to theorise about the roles these played in Iraq War reporting. This thesis then sought to provide original insight into the politics of conflict reporting within the Iraq War case study by unpacking U.S. state-media relations in order to determine how the strategies of the U.S. administration and U.S. media concurrently shaped this coverage.

From this research, this study developed and determined two unique and distinct empirical findings. This thesis discovered that the coinciding interests and strategies of the U.S. administration and the U.S. media were often mutually reinforcing, and ultimately promoted the one-sided narrative because it was mutually beneficial-- the U.S. administration desired a narrative which would support its military agenda and initiatives while the U.S. media required continued access to conflict zones and state personnel, as well as to maintain the credibility and reputations which came with this access, in order to pursue its economic agenda. Upholding the official narrative could thus fulfil both the state and media interests, however, this thesis has also found that this relationship, though mutually beneficial, was not necessarily equal. The capacity for the U.S. administration's strategies to not only regulate the U.S. media and limit information available for publication, but also to impose pressures and actual or implied attacks on jobs, reputation, and embed status, both targeted the U.S. media's business interests and largely tied the hands of any reporter or outlet attempting to seek information outside of the official narrative or publish dissenting views. Thus, not only was the U.S. media largely deterred from challenging or resisting the official regulations and implicit guidelines, it was made exceedingly challenging and essentially unfeasible to even try to do so, due to the extensive legal and formal as well as unofficial and implicit capacity of the U.S. administration to regulate, censor, or withhold information. Through a close critical examination of the specific and unique interests and strategies of the U.S. administration and U.S. media, this study has therefore determined that the Iraq War conflict reporting was directly and significantly shaped by U.S. state-media relations. These coinciding interests and strategies of the U.S. administration and U.S. media made perpetuation of

the official narrative mutually beneficial and was further reinforced by the unequal power relations, which ultimately shifted more control to the U.S. administration to impact on the coverage.

This area of research is of vital importance, because of the greater implications of conflict reporting and significance of the impact of U.S. state-media relations. Throughout this thesis, this study has illuminated the direct influence which the Iraq War conflict reporting had on foreign and military policy. This thesis has argued that without the one-sided coverage and contributing features determined by this study, including dramatised reporting, several inaccurate misperceptions, an 'us versus them narrative', and the overreliance on official sources, the initial invasion would not necessarily have been possible, nor would the continued justification for prolonging military action in Iraq. Utilising both secondary and primary research, this thesis has conclusively demonstrated that the Iraq War itself was built upon, and continued to be defended by, false pretences, which were perpetuated throughout the conflict reporting. The widely misleading Iraq War coverage is thus concerning and problematic because of the impact this conflict reporting had on shaping public opinion with inaccurate information, the direct and significant role this coverage played in shaping foreign and military policy, and the explicit violations to the U.S. media's First Amendment rights. This thesis has thus contributed insight into the politics of conflict reporting and determined its unique and original findings by critically analysing how and why the Iraq War coverage was largely one-sided and supportive of the U.S. administration through a close examination of the dynamic and intricacies of this complex U.S. state-media relationship.

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